FEEL SMART AGAIN

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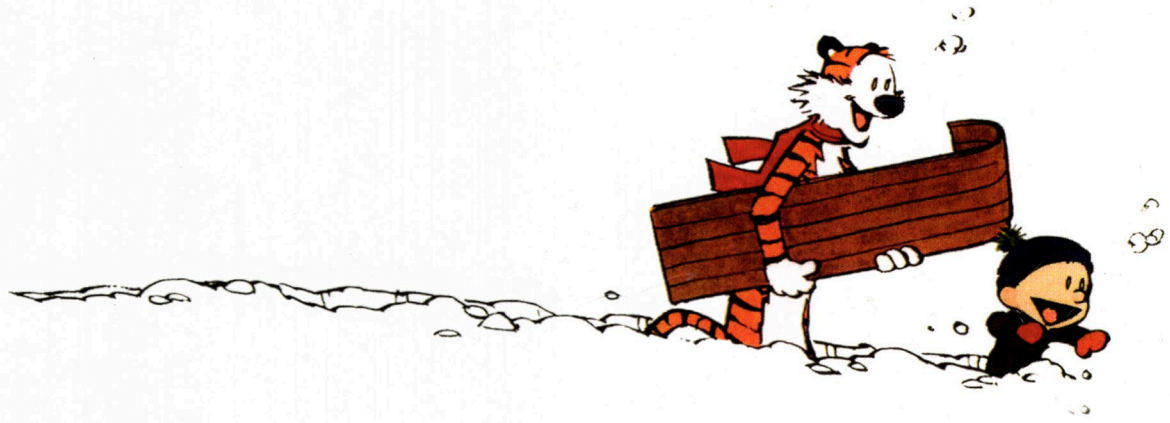

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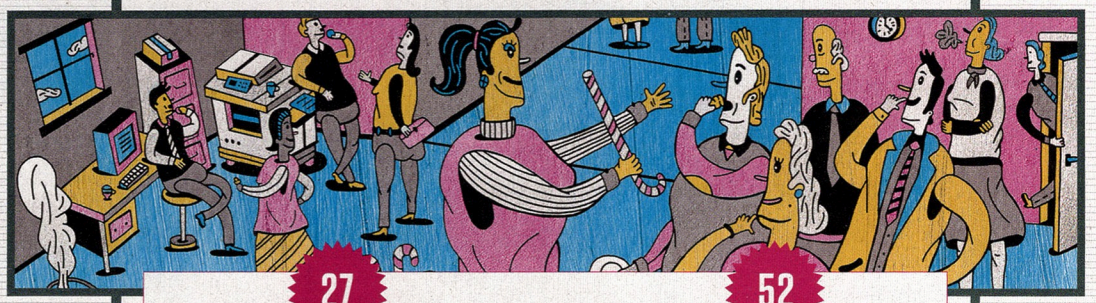

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CALVIN AND HOBBES COVER IMAGE: ©2013 Watterson. Universal Uclick/GoComics.

ILLUSTRATION BY PHIL WRIGGLESWORTH

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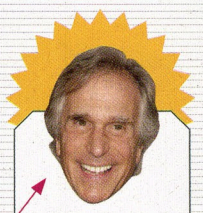

He made dyslexia jump the shark.
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ALAMY (CARROTS, DRAGONFLY, IGLOO, PILL BOTTLE, STOUT, WINKLER).
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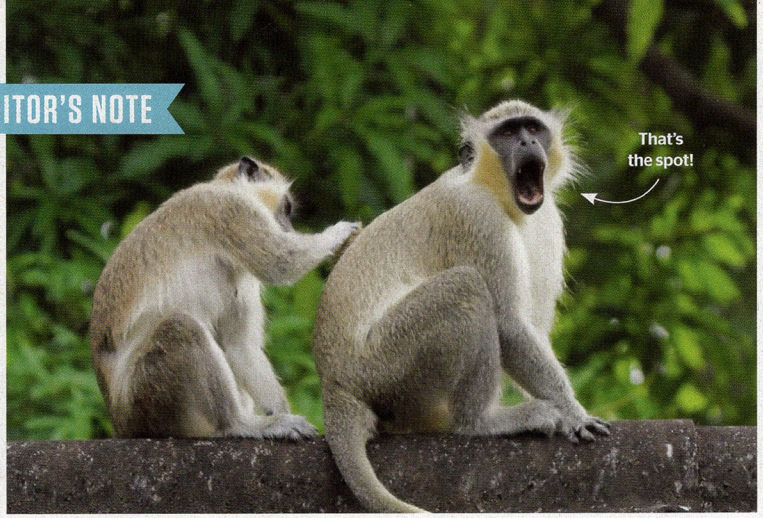
EDITOR'S NOTE



THERE'S A STORY I THINK ABOUT whenever the holidays roll around. Years ago, when I was studying abroad in Dharamsala, India, I was walking down a busy street, chatting with a friend, when I spotted a male leper sitting on a stoop asking a female leper to scratch his back. Neither of them had hands, but the woman hobbled over and started rubbing what was left of her limbs against the man's paper-thin shoulder blades. Clearly, what she was doing wasn't helping, and though she was trying, he was desperate for the smallest satisfaction that a fingernail could provide. And on this road filled with people, everyone just kept walking, including me. I kept talking until I realized my friend had disappeared. A second later, I saw her scratching the leper's back. For a full minute, I watched her as she made the tiniest gesture of humanity, touching someone no one else was willing to. And on his face, I witnessed the most beautiful smile I've ever seen.

PERHAPS I LIKE KNOWING THAT EVERYONE DESERVES A GOOD BACK SCRATCH.

I don't know why I think about that so much. Maybe it's because it reminds me to be a better person. Or because replaying the scene in my mind restores my faith in humanity. Or perhaps it's because I like knowing that everyone deserves a good back scratch.

For this issue, we've cobbled together some of our favorite things. Writer Jake Rossen managed to track down and interview my hero, Bill Watterson, for our "Calvin and Hobbes" story (page 27). (The fact that he got the elusive cartoonist to talk feels like a holiday miracle!) There's a wonderful detective tale on page 52 about the biggest art heist in American history. And instead of a traditional cover story, we decided to make it a personal challenge to cram as many jaw-dropping facts as we could in 12 deliriously fun pages.

For our most loyal readers, I'm hoping this issue feels like a good long back scratch. And for those new to our magazine, I'm hoping it gives you a reason to visit back soon.

Happy reading,

Mangesh

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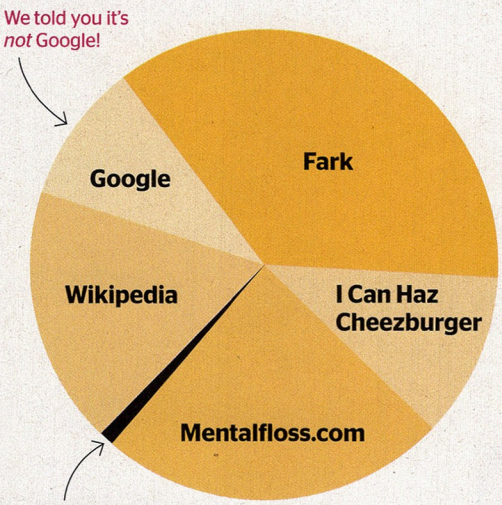
Old-Fashioned Letter of the Month

Your research about moose milk brought back memories. During the 1950s, my uncle created (or so he claimed) and drank his own version of moose milk. His recipe: 1) One cup of whole cow's milk. 2) One or two shots (he would say two) of your favorite Scotch whisky. 3) A pinch of nutmeg for color and flavor. **—MIKE GROULX**

Send your feedback to letters@mentalfloss.com, or tweet it @mentalfloss. If we print your comment, we'll send you one of these T-shirts, available at store.mentalfloss.com.

Our list of the 25 Most Powerful Websites provoked some spirited debate on **mentalfloss.com**. Among the sites you were disappointed not to see on the list:



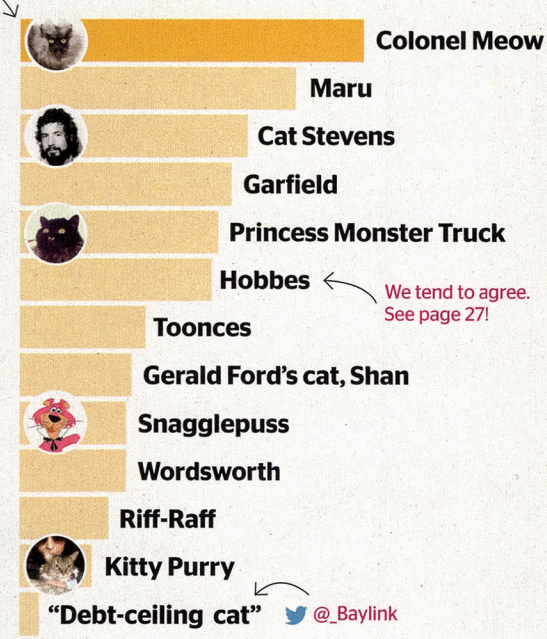
Whitehouse.com
"In case you don't recall, it was a porn site with huge traffic for obvious reasons." —Harry Knopp

"The Colonel will be displeased with this."
Laura Lowe

"That cover just convinced me to subscribe."
@voodoodarling

"GOOD JOB @mental_floss."
@IAMLILBUB

Twitter reminded us we forgot to mention these powerful cats.



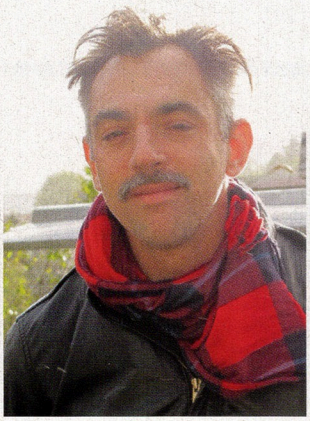
Mental Flaws
In November's "Modern Problems" (page 21), we mistakenly stated that the giant in "Jack and the Beanstalk" made his bread from the blood—not bones—of Englishmen. Sorry to all the fictional bean-dwelling, calcium-deficient giants!

FROM THE WEB

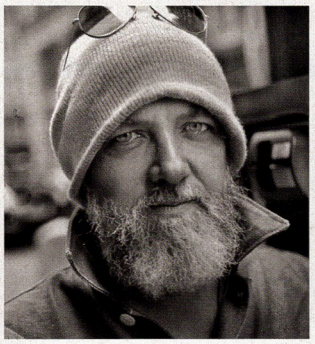
Why did pirates wear eye patches?

Short answer: The patches actually helped them see! For the full answer, go to ***mentalfloss.com/pirates.***

EVERETT COLLECTION (PIRATE)

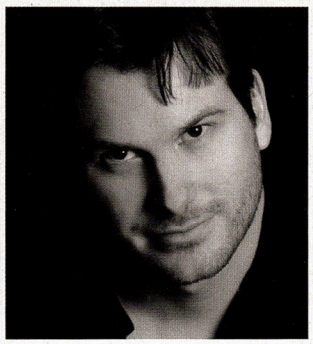


Tim Murphy will never look at paintings in thrift shops the same way now that he knows that the works from history's greatest unsolved art heist are still missing (page 52). On top of the novel he just finished, Tim's writing has also appeared in *The New York Times*, *New York*, and *Out*.



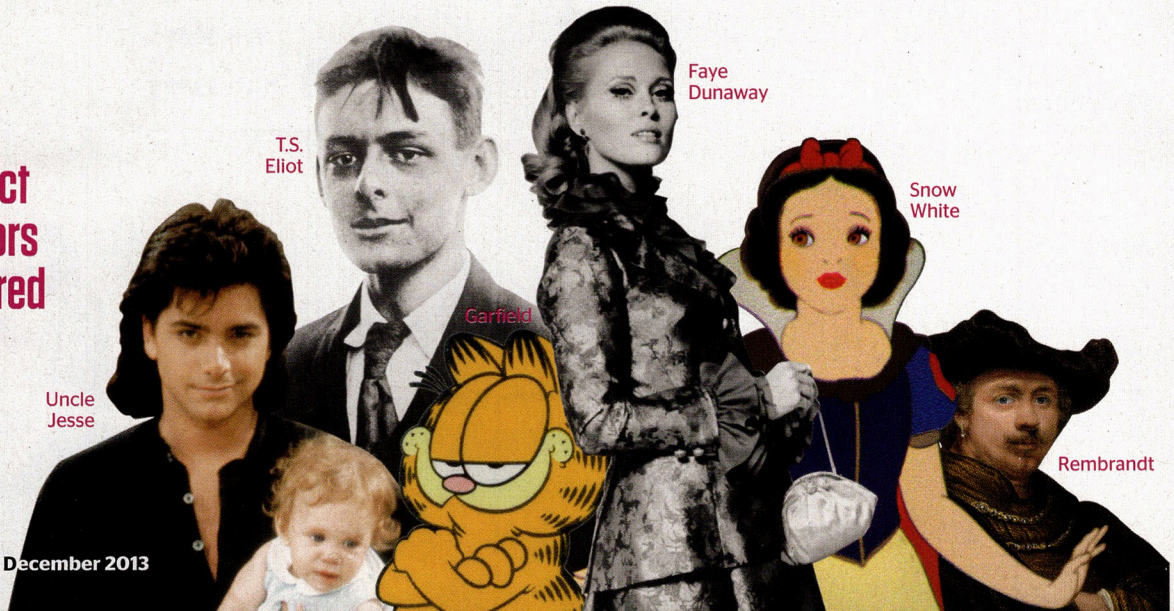
Andrew Hetherington is no kelp farmer, but that didn't stop him from setting sail for Long Island Sound to photograph Bren Smith's amazing underwater ocean farm (page 25). The Dublin-born photographer's work has also appeared in *GQ*, *Details*, *Esquire*, *Travel + Leisure*, and *The New Yorker*.

Lauren Tamaki appreciates a good stout, but instead of offering her one, we asked her to do the next best thing: illustrate the dark brew for "In the Spirit" (page 22). Her work has also appeared in *GQ*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Bust*. Lauren plans to celebrate the holidays by passing out on her comfy couch.



Jake Rossen has written for *The New York Times*, *The Village Voice*, and *ESPN the Magazine*, so we weren't surprised he managed to snag one of the first interviews in years with reclusive "Calvin and Hobbes" creator Bill Watterson (page 27). You can thank Jake with walnut-free holiday baked goods.

... and a few indirect contributors who inspired this issue



ALAMY; EVERETT COLLECTION (STAMOS, SNOW WHITE)

Gather 'Round, ye little nerds

there's something flossy for everyone on your naughty, nice, and nerdy list!

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the Spirited Scientist

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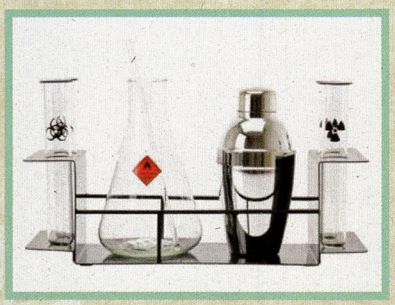
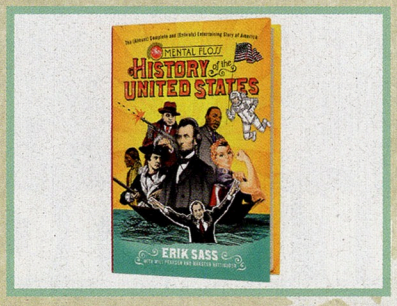


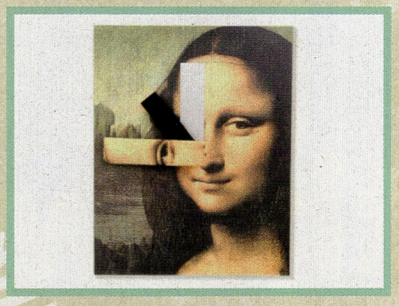
the History Buff

the history of the united states book



the Artsy Pants

mona lisa wall clock



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THIS MONTH'S THEME

SNOW

HOW TO BUILD AN IGLOO >
TOTALLY LEGAL YETI HUNTING >
THE SEARCH FOR SNOWFLAKE TWINS >
DRIVEWAYS OF THE RICH & FAMOUS >

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GRAHAM YELTON

FROSTY THE SALESMAN

WHEN GENE AUTRY sang "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" in 1949, he only did it because his wife made him. He reluctantly recorded the song, refusing to do more than one take. But when the holiday season rolled around and the recording became a commercial juggernaut, the country singer changed his tune. He followed it up with the Easter hit "Peter Cottontail" and then pressed his luck the following Christmas season with a song about a magical snowman. This time, Autry decided to get in on the merchandising. He teamed up with Sears Roebuck, and the store plastered Frosty on everything from toys to earmuffs. The gimmick worked. With their combined muscle, Sears and Autry sold more than a million copies of the single and countless toys and books, making Frosty not just history's greatest snowman but one of its savviest marketers.

Most Epic Snowball Fight Ever

The Confederacy may have come in second in the Civil War, but it was tops in chucking snow.

For many Southern soldiers, being pulled from home to fight in a grisly war had an unexpected perk: the chance to see snow for the first time. And often, those first snows were quickly molded into first snowballs.

Before long, the troops had cultivated an appreciation for snowball fighting. Things came to a head on January 29, 1863 when two feet of snow blanketed a winter encampment in Virginia's Rappahannock Valley. Turning their attention away from the North, the First and Fourth Texas Infantry Divisions launched a sneak attack on the Fifth Texas Infantry. The snow-chucking Texans then put aside their differences to launch an assault on the Third Arkansas.

From there, the snow battle raged out of control. As each new unit was vanquished, it joined forces with its conquerors to take on a fresh set of comrades. At the fight's peak, nearly 10,000 Confederate soldiers were hurling snowballs as the frosty combat grew more complex!

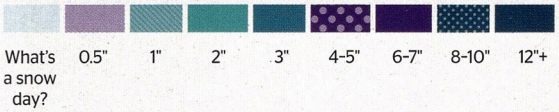
But then a few scoundrels had to go ruin it for everyone. When men began packing rocks into their snowballs, adding a little too much punch to their ammunition, commanding officers put an end to the fun. Soon snowy warfare was banned in rebel camps, leaving bored men with nothing to do but make snow angels and carve Robert E. Lee ice sculptures.

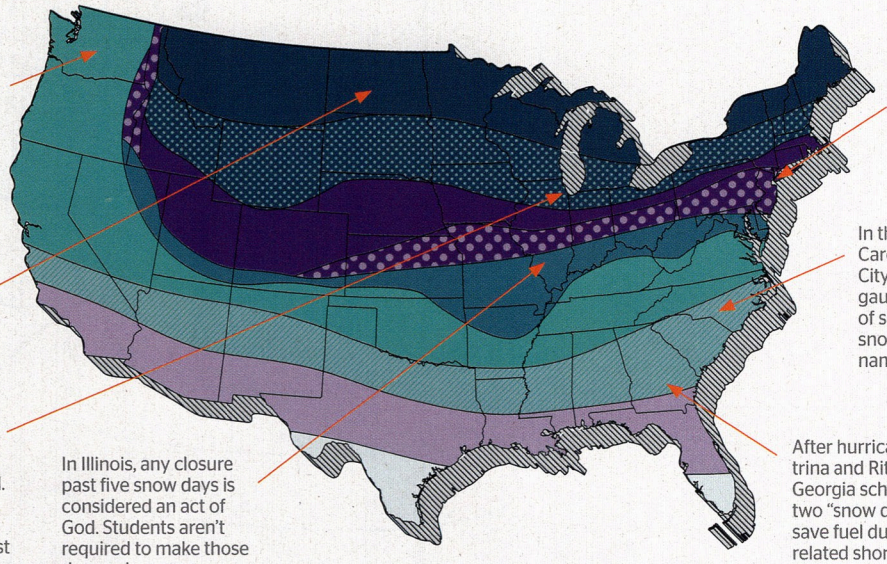
ILLUSTRATION BY BEN KIRCHNER

→ **THE BOTTOM LINE:** SNOW HAS NEVER BEEN REPORTED IN KEY WEST. → DOWNHILL SHOVEL RACING— USING A SHOVEL AS

Snow Day!

Are there any sweeter words in the English language? We've crunched the numbers to find how much snowfall it takes to give kids the day off.





Snow isn't the only thing that gets kids cheering. Last May, a Washington school gave students a "sun day" to bask in the weather.

North Dakota has no trouble with snow, but it's powerless against the heat. In August, five schools without air-conditioning got three days off after temperatures soared into the 90s.

What's it take to get a snow day in Chicago? Just a 20-inch snowfall. 2011's blizzard was the third-worst in city history, prompting the first snow day in 12 years.

In Illinois, any closure past five snow days is considered an act of God. Students aren't required to make those days up!

Between 1978 and 1996, New York City's public schools had zero snow days.

In the late 1980s, North Carolina's Burlington City Schools officials gauged the likelihood of snow days using a snow-predicting goat named Lulu.

After hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, Georgia schools took two "snow days" to save fuel due to storm-related shortages.

ALAMY

FROZEN ASSETS

To host the Winter Olympics in a beach town, Russia is banking on a new idea.

When organizers announced that the Russian city Sochi would host the 2014 Winter Olympics, the decision raised eyebrows. Sochi isn't exactly a ski town. In fact, high-profile Russians (Vladimir Putin included) flock to the Black Sea resort for the opposite reason: Sochi boasts mild winters and a subtropical climate where palm trees grow—not exactly a fit for games that rely on snow and ice. To clear the hurdle, Olympic organizers are employing a process known as "snow banking."

The committee started last year by firing up 400 giant snow cannons to create enough white stuff to blanket the venues. Between the cannons and the natural snowfall, organizers stashed 500,000 cubic meters of snow in the nearby mountains. Some of it has melted, but the remainder makes for a cool insurance policy if nature doesn't cooperate.

50°

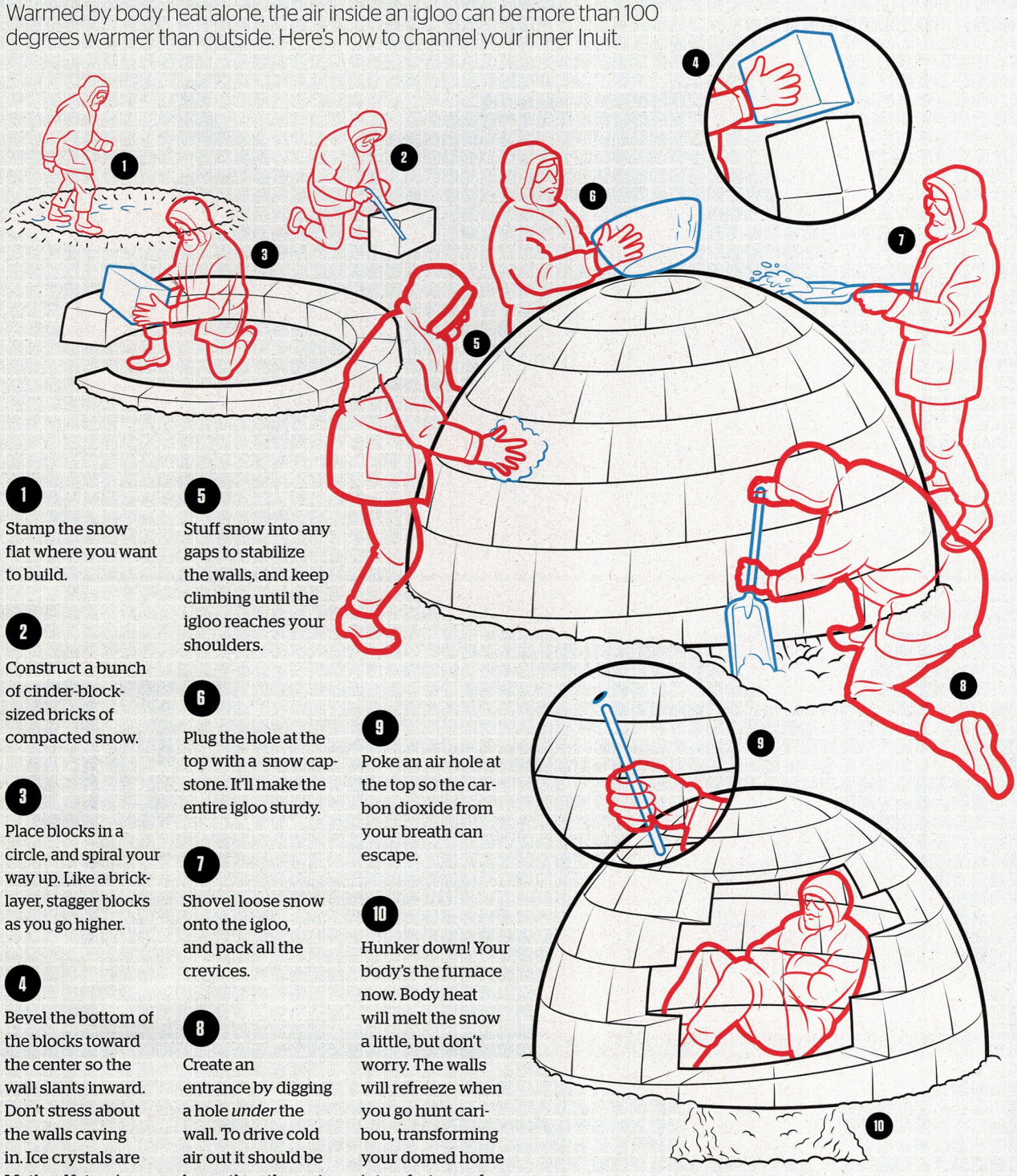
average Fahrenheit temperature of Sochi in February

The LumiLinna SnowCastle in Finland, the world's largest snow fort, has to be rebuilt every year. It houses a hotel and a chapel.

A SLED—IS A COMPETITIVE EVENT IN WHICH TOP RIDERS FLY AT MORE THAN 70 MPH. → MORE THAN 500 AMERICAN SCHOOLS ARE USING

House Hunters: Igloo Edition

Warmed by body heat alone, the air inside an igloo can be more than 100 degrees warmer than outside. Here's how to channel your inner Inuit.



1 Stamp the snow flat where you want to build.

2 Construct a bunch of cinder-block-sized bricks of compacted snow.

3 Place blocks in a circle, and spiral your way up. Like a bricklayer, stagger blocks as you go higher.

4 Bevel the bottom of the blocks toward the center so the wall slants inward. Don't stress about the walls caving in. Ice crystals are Mother Nature's superglue!

5 Stuff snow into any gaps to stabilize the walls, and keep climbing until the igloo reaches your shoulders.

6 Plug the hole at the top with a snow capstone. It'll make the entire igloo sturdy.

7 Shovel loose snow onto the igloo, and pack all the crevices.

8 Create an entrance by digging a hole *under* the wall. To drive cold air out it should be lower than the rest of the igloo.

9 Poke an air hole at the top so the carbon dioxide from your breath can escape.

10 Hunker down! Your body's the furnace now. Body heat will melt the snow a little, but don't worry. The walls will refreeze when you go hunt caribou, transforming your domed home into a fortress of solid ice.

ILLUSTRATION BY MIKE ROGALSKI

RECREATIONAL SNOWSHOE PROGRAMS TO FIGHT CHILDHOOD OBESITY. → IN 1809, NORWEGIAN MILITARY OFFICER OLAF RYE BECAME THE

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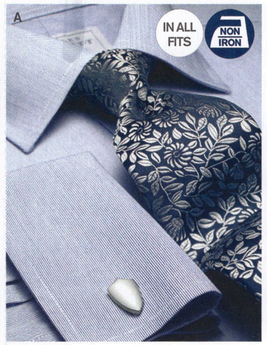
These "snow melt systems" aren't just for moguls. Cities such as Oslo, Norway, and Oak Park, Ill., have embedded their sidewalks with coils that use electricity, hot water, or geothermal heat to stay snow-free. The systems aren't cheap, but they offer a greener alternative to salting, and they efficiently keep walks and driveways clear—without having to fill the coffers of Big Snowplow.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALEX EBEN MEY ANDY J. MILLER (NEVER SHOVEL). AL

FIRST KNOWN SKI JUMPER BY LAUNCHING HIMSELF MORE THAN 30 FEET IN THE AIR. → THE FIRST COMMERCIAL SNOWBOARD WAS



SLIM FIT

KEY FEATURES
• All shirts available in button or French (cufflink) cuff • Slim Fit • Classic collar (except C&D Extra Slim Fit: Spread Collar)
• Neck sizes: Slim Fit 14½" - 18", Extra Slim Fit 14½" - 17½", Classic Fit 15" - 20"
• 100% cotton • Wash at 105°F • Imported

A BLUE HAIRLINE STRIPE NON-IRON SLIM FIT
FN262 BLU ~~$160~~ $39.50
EXTRA SLIM FIT
RG065 BLU ~~$160~~ $39.50
CLASSIC FIT
SN075 BLU ~~$160~~ $39.50
TIE Handmade Navy & Silver Floral
TH753 NAV ~~$170~~ $59

B ROYAL GINGHAM CHECK SLIM FIT
FC090 RYL ~~$140~~ $39.50
EXTRA SLIM FIT
RD027 RYL ~~$140~~ $39.50
CLASSIC FIT
SC158 RYL ~~$140~~ $39.50
TIE Woven Navy & Gold Club Stripe
TL054 NGO ~~$100~~ $39.50

C WHITE TWILL NON-IRON SLIM FIT
FN017 WHT ~~$160~~ $39.50
EXTRA SLIM FIT SPREAD COLLAR
RG059 WHT ~~$160~~ $39.50
CLASSIC FIT
SN061 WHT ~~$160~~ $39.50
TIE Woven Royal & White Puppytooth
TL069 RWH ~~$100~~ $39.50

D SKY BENGAL STRIPE NON-IRON SLIM FIT
FN237 SKY ~~$160~~ $39.50
EXTRA SLIM FIT SPREAD COLLAR
RG040 SKY ~~$160~~ $39.50
CLASSIC FIT
SN260 SKY ~~$160~~ $39.50
TIE Woven Green & Blue Multi Check
TW407 BGR ~~$100~~ $39.50

SPORT SHIRTS

KEY FEATURES
• All shirts available in button cuff • Slim Fit & Classic Fit • Button down collar • Neck sizes: Slim Fit 14½" - 18", Classic Fit 15" - 20"
• 100% cotton • Wash at 105°F • Imported

A RASPBERRY GINGHAM CHECK NON-IRON SLIM FIT
CD077 RED ~~$160~~ $39.50
CLASSIC FIT
CZ096 RED ~~$160~~ $39.50

B SKY GINGHAM CHECK NON-IRON SLIM FIT
CD074 SKY ~~$160~~ $39.50
CLASSIC FIT
CZ093 SKY ~~$160~~ $39.50

ORDER IN THE NEXT 10 DAYS

CLASSIC FIT

KEY FEATURES
• All shirts available in button or French (cufflink) cuff • Classic Fit • Classic collar
• Neck sizes: Slim Fit 14½" - 18", Extra Slim Fit 14½" - 17½", Classic Fit 15" - 20" • 100% cotton (A,C&D)
• 100% easy to iron cotton (B)
• Wash at 105°F • Imported

All shirts available in button cuff.

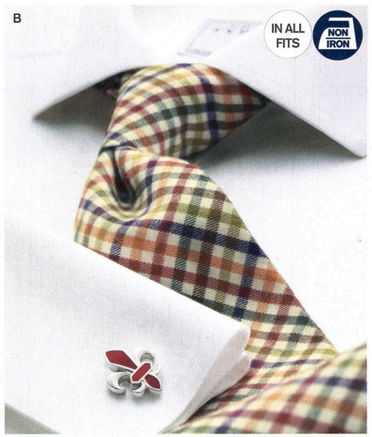
A BLUE & GOLD PRINCE OF WALES CHECK NON-IRON CLASSIC FIT
SN320 BGO ~~$160~~ $39.50
SLIM FIT
FP277 BGO ~~$140~~ $39.50
TIE Woven Gold & Blue Classic Spot
TW874 GDB ~~$100~~ $39.50

B LILAC POPLIN CLASSIC FIT
SP035 LLC ~~$140~~ $39.50
SLIM FIT
FP027 LLC ~~$140~~ $39.50
EXTRA SLIM FIT
FD082 LLC ~~$140~~ $39.50
TIE Woven Silver & White Pindot
TW895 SLV ~~$100~~ $39.50

C WHITE HERRINGBONE CLASSIC FIT
SE033 WHT ~~$140~~ $39.50
SLIM FIT
FE013 WHT ~~$140~~ $39.50
EXTRA SLIM FIT
RE006 WHT ~~$140~~ $39.50
TIE Woven Gold Natte
TW068 GLD ~~$100~~ $39.50

D SKY TWILL NON-IRON CLASSIC FIT
SN112 SKY ~~$160~~ $39.50
SLIM FIT
FN041 SKY ~~$160~~ $39.50
EXTRA SLIM FIT
RG064 SKY ~~$160~~ $39.50
TIE Handmade Blue Brown Tartan
TH793 BLU ~~$170~~ $59

6 MONTH MONEY BACK GUARANTEE



EXTRA SLIM FIT

KEY FEATURES
• All shirts available in button or French (cufflink) cuff • Extra Slim Fit
• Spread collar (except A: Classic Collar)
• Neck sizes: Slim Fit 14½" - 18", Extra Slim Fit 14½" - 17½", Classic Fit 15" - 20" • 100% cotton
• Wash at 105°F • Imported

A BLUE PUPPYTOOTH CHECK CLASSIC COLLAR EXTRA SLIM FIT
FD086 BLU ~~$140~~ $39.50
TIE Handmade Magenta Satin Slim (7cm)
TS374 MAG ~~$170~~ $59

B WHITE IMPERIAL OXFORD NON-IRON SPREAD COLLAR EXTRA SLIM FIT
RG070 WHT ~~$160~~ $39.50
SLIM FIT CLASSIC COLLAR
FN123 WHT ~~$160~~ $39.50
CLASSIC FIT CLASSIC COLLAR
SN196 WHT ~~$160~~ $39.50
TIE Handmade Country Check Multi Slim (7cm)
TS372 MLT ~~$170~~ $59

C SMALL MULTI GRID CHECK NON-IRON SPREAD COLLAR EXTRA SLIM FIT
RG083 MLT ~~$160~~ $39.50
TIE Woven Royal Plain Slim (7cm)
TV355 RYL ~~$100~~ $39.50

D SKY MINI GRID CHECK NON-IRON SPREAD COLLAR EXTRA SLIM FIT
RG078 SKY ~~$160~~ $39.50
SLIM FIT CLASSIC COLLAR
FN265 SKY ~~$160~~ $39.50
CLASSIC FIT CLASSIC COLLAR
SN304 SKY ~~$160~~ $39.50
TIE Woven Green & White Pindot
TW896 GRN ~~$100~~ $39.50

E BLUE IMPERIAL OXFORD NON-IRON SPREAD COLLAR EXTRA SLIM FIT
RG072 BLU ~~$160~~ $39.50
SLIM FIT CLASSIC COLLAR
FN112 BLU ~~$160~~ $39.50
CLASSIC FIT CLASSIC COLLAR
SN185 BLU ~~$160~~ $39.50
TIE Handmade Red & Navy Grenadine Stripe Slim (7cm)
TS367 RNV ~~$170~~ $59

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JERMYN STREET LONDON

Dear Sir,

Charles Tyrwhitt (pronounced 'Tirrit' by the way) is a small but passionate British shirt maker, located on London's famous Jermyn Street, with its 300 year history of quality shirt making.

For the next ten days only, you can buy up to five of our immaculately crafted **shirts for only $39.50 each – saving you over $100 per shirt**. And once you've worn them, I hope you'll come back for more, which is why I am making you this Exclusive Introductory Offer, which includes **Free Shipping**.

Nick Wheeler.

Nicolas Charles Tyrwhitt Wheeler,
President

feefo
Our US customers rate our product & service as good or excellent 96%
(w/c 1st July 2013)
Independent customer feedback forum

Six MONTH GUARANTEE

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

If you are not 100% satisfied with your shirts, you can return them free of charge (a returns label is included with them) within six months, for an exchange or full and immediate refund.

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WHEN YOUR SHIRT FITS YOU FEEL FANTASTIC

CLASSIC FIT
- Our most generous fit
- Longer shirt tails that stay tucked in

SLIM FIT
- Narrower at the waist with shorter tails
- A more defined silhouette

EXTRA SLIM FIT
- Our slimmest fit, with back darts
- A sleek, modern look

Offer Terms & Conditions The shirts for $39.50 offer applies to Charles Tyrwhitt men's dress or sport shirts originally priced at $140 or $160. Woven tie offer price is $39.50, original price $100, Handmade tie offer price is $59, original price $170. Orders are limited to 5 shirts per household. All shipping is free for orders placed before midnight GMT on 15th December 2013 when this offer ends.. This offer is not valid in conjunction with any other offers or vouchers. We reserve the right to withdraw, amend or extend these offers at any time, without prior notice. 'Strike through' prices where shown refer to original selling prices offered on our website www.ctshirts.com/uspreview between 13th July 2012 and 13th August 2013. See online for Charles Tyrwhitt's full clothing range, more great offers and full terms and conditions.

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JERMYN STREET LONDON

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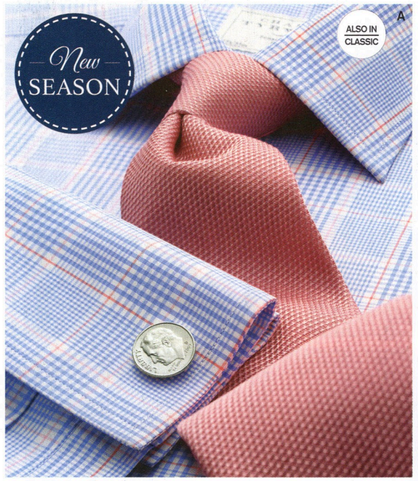

SLIM FIT

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• Wash at 105°F • Imported

A PINK AND BLUE PRINCE OF WALES CHECK SLIM FIT
FC243 BLU ~~$140~~ $39.50
CLASSIC FIT
SC039 BLU ~~$140~~ $39.50
TIE Woven Plain Pink
TW335 PNK ~~$100~~ $39.50

B ROYAL TWILL GRID CHECK SLIM FIT
FN260 RYL ~~$160~~ $39.50
EXTRA SLIM FIT SPREAD COLLAR
RG063 RYL ~~$160~~ $39.50
CLASSIC FIT
SN288 RYL ~~$160~~ $39.50
TIE Woven Plain Red
TW336 RED ~~$100~~ $39.50

C BLUE WIDE HERRINGBONE NON-IRON SPREAD COLLAR SLIM FIT
FA064 BLU ~~$160~~ $39.50
EXTRA SLIM FIT SPREAD COLLAR
RG074 BLU ~~$160~~ $39.50
CLASSIC FIT
SN325 BLU ~~$160~~ $39.50
TIE Handmade Grey Grenadine Spot
TS369 GRY ~~$170~~ $59

D PURPLE TWILL PUPPYTOOTH NON-IRON SLIM FIT
FN273 PUR ~~$160~~ $39.50
TIE Woven Navy & White Textured Spot
TW885 NAV ~~$100~~ $39.50

E WHITE PINPOINT SLIM FIT
FE002 WHT ~~$140~~ $39.50
CLASSIC FIT
SO009 WHT ~~$140~~ $39.50
TIE Woven Red & Blue Multi Check
TW438 RDB ~~$100~~ $39.50

PLUS FREE SHIPPING

Housi

Warmed by b
degrees war

1 Stamp the snov flat where you to build.

2 Construct a bu of cinder-block sized bricks of compacted sno

3 Place blocks in circle, and spira way up. Like a b layer, stagger bl as you go highe

4 Bevel the bottom of the blocks toward the center so the wall slants inward. Don't stress about the walls caving in. Ice crystals are Mother Nature's superglue!

8 Create an entrance by digging a hole *under* the wall. To drive cold air out it should be lower than the rest of the igloo.

a little, but don't worry. The walls will refreeze when you go hunt caribou, transforming your domed home into a fortress of solid ice.

ILLUSTRATION BY MIKE ROGALSKI

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CLASSIC FIT
SO009 WHT ~~$140~~ $39.50
TIE Woven Red & Blue Multi Check
TW438 RDB ~~$100~~ $39.50

PLUS FREE SHIPPING

RECREATIONAL SNOWSHOE PROGRAMS TO FIGHT CHILDHOOD OBESITY. → IN 1809, NORWEGIAN MILITARY OFFICER OLAF RYE BECAME THE

Snow Doubt About It

Want to get a linguist fired up? Ask him how many words Eskimos have for snow.

Ferocious isn't a word usually associated with linguists, but it's the only accurate way to describe the century-long debate over how many words Eskimos have for snow. Ever since anthropologist Franz Boas published his findings that the Inuit family of Eskimo languages had dozens of words for the wintry blanket in 1911, linguists have been battling over the accuracy of his claim as well as the proper definition of the word *word*.

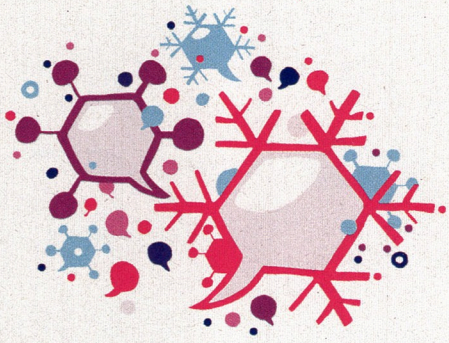
In one sense, Boas was right. Inuit speakers can bang out hundreds of words to describe fallen snow, lightly dusted snow, and pretty much anything in between. But it's not because they sat around crafting words for the ubiquitous powder. Rather, it's a relic of how their polysynthetic language works. Basically, Inuit speakers build words by taking a root—*qani* for "snowflake"—and adding suffixes called postbases to further describe the snowflakes in question. Since there's no limit to how many postbases speakers can string onto a root word, Inuit actually has well over a hundred words for snow. But are they distinct words? Most linguists agree that they're not. On the other hand, some scholars concede this point but argue that Boas was right; there are dozens of root words for different kinds of snow.

So what's the correct answer? As the debate rages on, we prefer to take a safer stance: If you meet an Inuit speaker, you're probably going to talk about the weather.

TALK THE TALK

Use these words to fake your way through idle chitchat with your Yupik Eskimo friends.

Qanikcaq: soft, deep snow
Muruaneq: deep snow on the ground
Qanisqineq: snow floating in water
Natquik: drifting snow
Nutaryuk: freshly fallen snow



OFFICIAL RULES FOR YETI HUNTING

Zoologists have yet to prove that the abominable snowman is stalking the Himalayas. But that doesn't mean you can't hunt for him—you'll just need to complete some paperwork. In 1959, the U.S. State Department issued a dispatch advising American hunters on how to stay on the right side of the law in Nepal. The basic rules: Abominable huntsmen need to drop 5,000 Indian rupees on a yeti-hunting permit. On the off chance anyone spots a snowman, the permit only allows shots in self-defense. And while that may make sense from an ecological standpoint, we can't decide whether it's a reasonable request or a sign of the yeti lobby's influence on Nepalese politics.

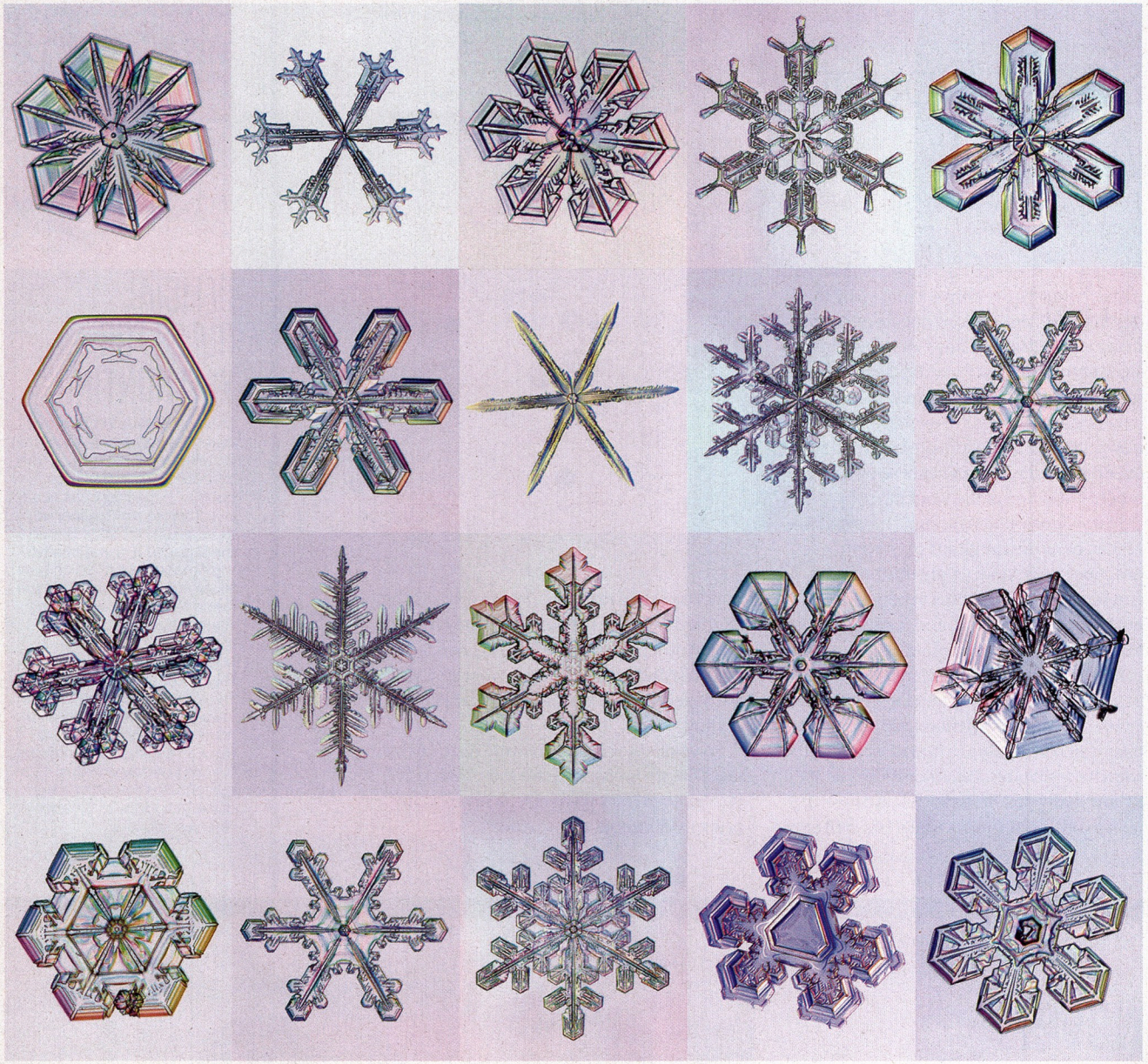
Never Shovel Again!

NO MATTER how much snow falls on Bill Gates's house, he never has to pick up a shovel. And not because he makes Melinda do the grunt work. The Gates home is equipped with a brilliant heated driveway that melts snow before it accumulates, so pulling the car out of the garage is never a problem.

These "snow melt systems" aren't just for moguls. Cities such as Oslo, Norway, and Oak Park, Ill., have embedded their sidewalks with coils that use electricity, hot water, or geothermal heat to stay snow-free. The systems aren't cheap, but they offer a greener alternative to salting, and they efficiently keep walks and driveways clear—without having to fill the coffers of Big Snowplow.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALEX EBEN MEYER (SNOWFLAKES), ANDY J. MILLER (NEVER SHOVEL), ALAMY (SKIER)

FIRST KNOWN SKI JUMPER BY LAUNCHING HIMSELF MORE THAN 30 FEET IN THE AIR. → THE FIRST COMMERCIAL SNOWBOARD WAS



Can You Find Two Identical Snowflakes?

MAYBE! But probably not. Snowflakes develop when water molecules freeze together. And as Caltech professor Kenneth G. Libbrecht writes on his astonishingly thorough site snowcrystals.com, not every water molecule is identical. The vast majority feature oxygen atoms with eight neutrons while some contain 10 neutrons—the molecules have subtly different shapes, which leads to slightly different forms when they freeze.

There's no fundamental law of the universe that says snowflakes can't be identical, Libbrecht notes. But since each flake is made of millions of randomly arrayed water molecules that aren't quite uniform, the odds of stumbling into twin flakes are astronomically slim. According to Libbrecht, one in 10^{158} snowflakes may repeat itself. Since that figure is significantly larger than the total number of atoms in the universe, you'll have to do some very cold digging to find the copycat. Even by optimistic estimates, you'd likely need to devote the next several thousand years to your search in order to find two identical flakes. Happy hunting!

KENNETH LIBBRECHT

INTRODUCED IN 1965—IT WAS CALLED THE SNURFER. → SNOWMOBILE

SKIPPING IS THE SPORT OF RIDING SNOWMOBILES

America's Toughest City

Any city can deal with snow. Syracuse *conquers* it. Here's why America's snowiest major city laughs in Mother Nature's face.

IT'S BEEN HERE BEFORE Thanks to the lake effect off Lake Ontario, the city battles an average of 10 feet of snow each winter.

... AND IT KNOWS THINGS CAN ALWAYS GET SNOWIER Ten feet is just an average. In the winter of 1992–93, Syracuse mustered a personal best: 16 feet of the imposing white.

IT USES EVERY WEAPON AT HAND Syracuse will plow, shovel, salt, and—if things get really bad—legislate snow out of existence. In March 1992, the Common Council decreed that any further snowfall before Christmas Eve was illegal. Mother Nature didn't listen—it flurried two days later. (The outlaw clouds are still at large.)

IT'S RELENTLESS A few flakes can't stop the city. In 2010, more than six feet of snow fell in December, forcing Syracuse's Hancock International Airport to shut down ... for a *total* of just 15 minutes!

IT GOES BIG How did the airport keep rolling? It used the world's largest snowplow, a beast with a 3-inch-thick, 32-foot-long blade.

What causes lake-effect snow? In the case of Syracuse, frigid air masses are pushed south over Lake Ontario. As the air travels over the water, heat and moisture rise to form snow clouds, which drift to shore, dumping their contents on the Orangemen below.

Aerosol spray-on snow is beautiful on a wreath but terrible for your heart. It's largely made of saturated fats.

Know Your Snow

Inuits may have a hundred words for it. We have at least four.

	Traits	Forms When	Good For	Alternate Use
POWDER	Newly fallen, loosely packed	Relatively dry snow is freshly fallen	Skiing	Truly divine snow angels
CORN SNOW	Wet snow with coarse grain	Wet snow repeatedly melts and refreezes	Avalanches	Eating off the snow cob
CRUST	A thick, icy outer layer	The top coat of snow melts and freezes back over	Snowballs	More snowballs
CRUD	Wet, lumpy, and uneven	Wind, rain, or skiers muck up the powder	Snowboarding	Wet, lumpy, and uneven snowmen

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANDY J. MILLER (SNOWMAN), JINGYAO GUO (SNOW)

ACROSS UNFROZEN LAKES. → THE WORLD RECORD FOR MOST SNOWFALL IN 24 HOURS: SILVER LAKE, COLO., GOT 76 INCHES IN 1921.

BEST IN GLASS

ZAGAT WINE

Now choosing your wine is as easy as choosing a restaurant

Here are 15 delicious, handcrafted wines – guaranteed to delight you and your holiday guests. And here's a $160 savings, so you can enjoy them all for just $69.99 (plus $19.99 shipping & tax). This is your special introduction to The Zagat Wine Club.

Top-Vintage Bordeaux and beyond

Just take a look. Your Bordeaux won Gold at the region's top show. Your Argentine Malbec won Gold in London, where judges called it "rich, powerful and ageworthy." Your California Cabernet is a smooth, oaky classic from the great William Knuttel. All three are worthy partners for steak. If meaty pasta is on the menu, reach for the Barbanera family's fine Chianti. And when it's turkey time, serve silky, top-estate Chilean Pinot Noir.

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We'll tell you about an exciting new dozen every three months, with no obligation. You can say 'no thanks,' change wines, delay delivery or cancel anytime. Each future club case is just $139.99 (saving you at least 20%). And every wine comes with full tasting notes and serving tips. In true Zagat style, you'll be able to rate and review your wines. And if any bottle fails to delight, you'll be refunded in full. It's refreshingly simple – give it a try.

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BE AMAZING

Find Your Balance

Want to avoid splurging this holiday season? Wear high heels to the mall. According to a recent study by Brigham Young University marketing professors, any physical stimulus that requires a person to focus on balancing while shopping affects his or her purchase decisions. For example, someone leaning back in a chair while browsing the web for a TV is more likely to purchase a reasonably priced set than opt for the least or most expensive options. (Riding an escalator or practicing yoga before shopping has the same effect.) Seems like a good reason to start your next shopping trip at the shoe department!

ILLUSTRATION BY PETE GAMLEN

Wheel Simple

Even if you're dressed head to toe in spandex, you aren't fully equipped without this essential bike knowledge.

Do bikes *really* help the environment?
Cycling displaces more than 238 million gallons of gasoline usage each year. That's like taking five SUVs off the road!

Who's the father of cycling?
German baron Karl von Drais invented a pedal-less wooden bike in 1817. It had to be pushed along Flintstones-style! But Von Drais's design had a critical flaw: It tipped over when you placed a woolly mammoth rib on its side rack.

How many bikes exist in the world?
There are more than a billion bikes, and half of them are in China. Or as the American optimist would say, half are *not* in China!

What's the best place to ride my bike?
According to a 2013 study, America's most bike-friendly city is Portland, Ore. Or, as bike thieves refer to it, "heaven."

Can I put my bike on autopilot?
A bike traveling at 8 mph or faster can stay upright without a rider. Unrelated: Any movie producers want to buy my new screenplay, *Ghost Bike?*

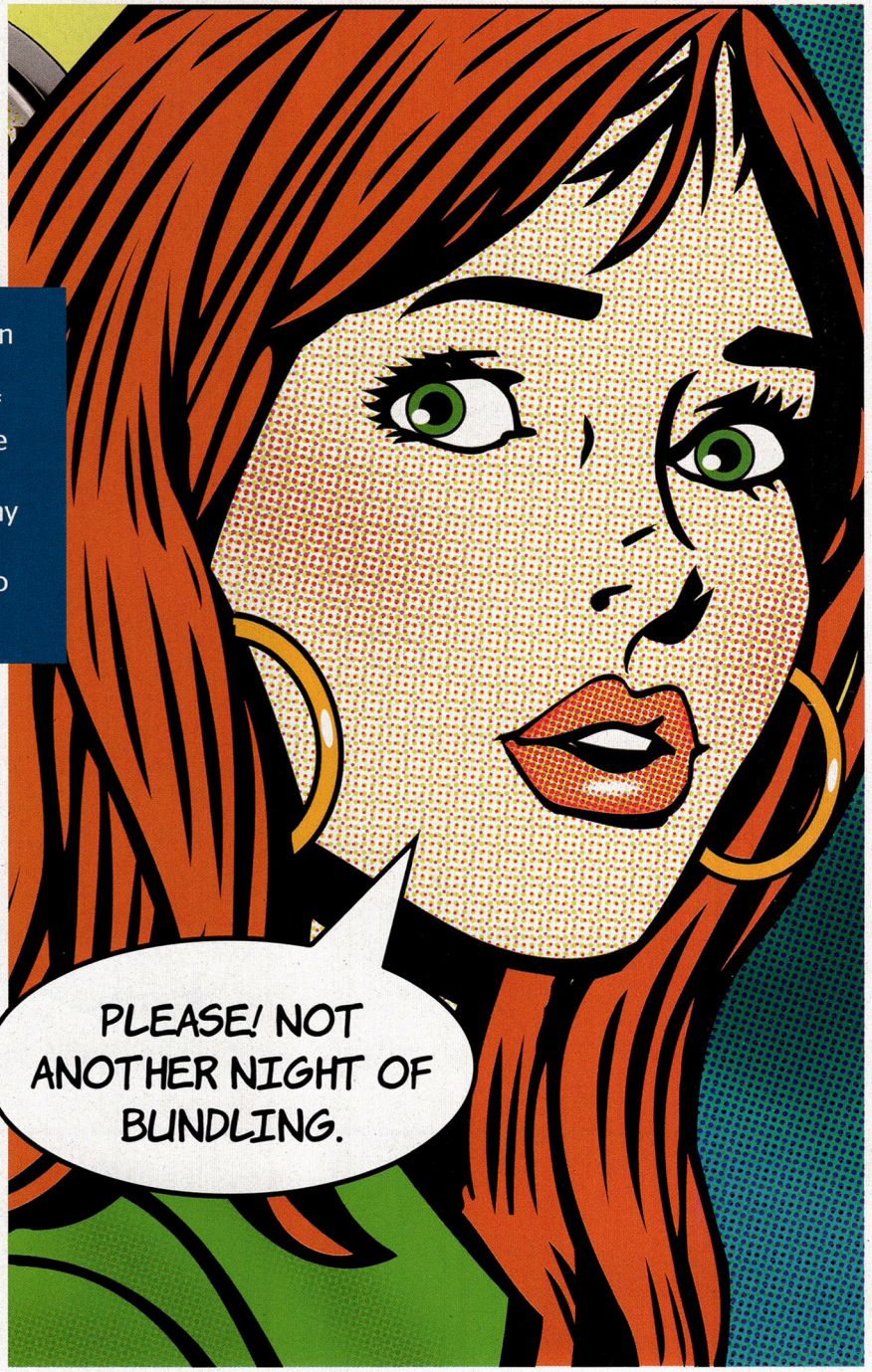
What's the craziest bike ever created?
A behemoth of a tandem that stretched out to 67 feet and sat 35 riders.

Can I get a DUI on a bike?
You bet! Officials from the United Nations on down define bikes as "vehicles." So kids, don't get behind the handlebars after too many strawberry milks.

CORBIS

Save the Dating

DEAR A.J., Online dating has been unbearable (if I ever see another photo of a shirtless guy in front of his car, I'll throw my laptop out the window). The bar scene and blind dates are equally unappealing. Any suggestions for a single woman desperately seeking a sane way to meet men? –CATALINA IN PHOENIX



FINDING A MATE in modern America can be hard. But please know that it could be worse. A lot worse.

At least you're not in a ghost marriage. Once practiced in China and Sudan, this ritual involved a wedding in which either the bride or groom—sometimes both—was dead. These hookups took place to ensure a partner for the afterlife, forge closer ties between two families, or inspire Reese Witherspoon romantic comedies.

The Bible is also packed with bizarre romantic customs. For instance: If a woman's husband dies, she has to marry his brother. The good news is, there's a loophole. If she performs a *halitza*—in which she takes off the younger brother's sandal and spits in his face—they're considered broken up. (Sounds harsh, but it's actually more polite than breaking up by text message.)

Traditional Balinese society was even more literal in its interpretation of "brotherly love." Boy-girl twins were expected to marry. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, this is because it was assumed they had sex while in utero. Trying to resist typing the phrase "get a womb, people." Failing.

Many societies—including the Tzeltal of Mexico and the Hmong of Southeast Asia—once practiced another dreadful custom called "bride kidnapping," which is pretty much what it sounds like. A woman was nabbed and brought to a man's house, where she was pressured by his relatives to marry him. The practice continues in some places, including rural Kyrgyzstan, where a woman is kept in a room until she accepts a traditional marriage scarf.

Even in the U.S., dating hasn't always been a breeze. Since skin-on-skin contact was verboten during the 18th century, colonists came up with some elaborate MacGyver-like workarounds. One was a peculiar custom called bundling, in which the couple was tied together—fully clothed—for a night of frustration and halitosis. Another was a "courting stick," a long hollow tube that allowed lovers to talk to each other while staying far apart. You could invest in your own courting stick, I guess, but maybe give Match.com another shot first and learn to make liberal use of its block button.

Have a problem for A.J.? Send your woes to **letters@mentalfloss.com.**

ALAMY

Drink to Empress

Sip away the winter chills with the beer that won over a whole empire.

IN THE LATE 18TH CENTURY, English porter brewers started developing amped-up versions of their dark beers for export to the region around the Baltic Sea. These "stout" takes on the style packed even more hoppy bitterness and alcoholic punch than normal porters, and drinkers in the frigid region couldn't get enough. That included Russsia's Catherine the Great. In 1795, a historian wrote: "The Empress of All Russia is indeed so partial to Porter that she has ordered repeatedly very large quantities for her own drinking and that of her court." Catherine gave the beer her imperial seal of approval, and as result, the new English beer style picked up the confused name "Russian imperial stout."

Whatever the moniker, drinkers across Europe agreed it was delicious. With its roasted flavors, thick body, and unusual potency, it was the perfect tipple for a cold night. Enterprising Baltic and Russian brewers saw how well their English counterparts' wares were selling and began formulating their own stouts and strong porters; the British beer empire eventually conceded these markets to local brewers.

Today, Russian imperial stout has become a favorite of drinkers and brewers around the world. Its rich flavors, ranging from coffee to chocolate to dark fruits, are complex enough to keep even hardened beer snobs interested, and their strength—alcohol content often tops 10 percent—demands slow sipping that makes them easy to savor. If you want to spend a snowy evening enjoying a single beer, look no further than Catherine the Great's bar.

5 TO TRY

Give your fridge the imperial decadence it needs.

BELL'S EXPEDITION STOUT
Licorice, cherry, and espresso converge with sweetness to make a perfect stout that only gets better as it ages.

STONE IMPERIAL RUSSIAN STOUT
Huge coffee flavors are fortified with piney hops, like an aggressive snowman wielding a Christmas tree.

COURAGE IMPERIAL RUSSIAN STOUT
Roasty malt and rich plum make this the perfect accompaniment for—or excuse for avoiding—shoveling snow.

OUR PICK

SAMUEL SMITH'S IMPERIAL STOUT
This English classic boasts chocolate, toffee, and red wine, like a candymaker who's spent too much time at the pub.

GREAT DIVIDE OAK AGED YETI
With a huge, thick body and a creamy, cocoa-powder finish, this is beer's answer to the chocolate milkshake.

ILLUSTRATION BY LAUREN TAMAKI

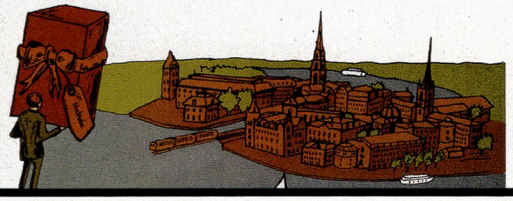
"The Little Mermaid"

Copenhagen's most famous statue may have turned 100 this year, but she's still got the confidence to sunbathe in the buff.

In 1909, Carlsberg beer scion Carl Jacobsen saw a **PERFORMANCE OF THE BALLET** "The Little Mermaid."

He loved how it adapted **HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN'S** Danish story.

Jacobsen wanted to turn the story into **A SCULPTURE AND GIFT IT TO** Copenhagen.



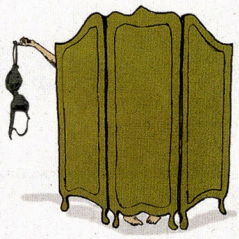
Jacobsen had **THE PERFECT MODEL** in mind: ballerina Ellen Price.

SCULPTOR EDVARD ERIKSEN agreed to bring Jacobsen's vision to life.

There was just one problem: **PRICE WOULDN'T POSE NUDE.**

But wait, **MERMAIDS ARE ALWAYS NUDE!**

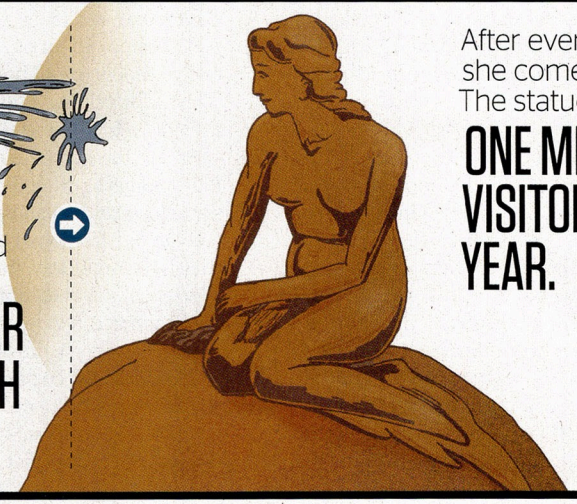
Eriksen improvised, using Price's face **WHILE HIS WIFE, ELINE,** stepped in for the statue's body.



By 1913, Eriksen was ready to unveil his work **IN THE HARBOR** near Langelinje Pier.

It soon became **COPENHAGEN'S UNOFFICIAL MASCOT.**

Over the years, the mermaid has been beheaded, splashed with paint, and **BLOWN OFF HER PEDESTAL WITH EXPLOSIVES.**



After every disaster, she comes back. The statue still draws **ONE MILLION VISITORS EACH YEAR.**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY AARON LLOYD BARR

Have a Hearth!

Old-world cooking is new again in the San Francisco food scene.

WHILE PLANNING MENUS for TBD, a brand-new wood-fired restaurant in San Francisco, executive chef Mark Liberman took a field trip to Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia. There, he says, he found a reenactor manning the hearth and "just sat there for an hour and a half, watching and talking with him."

It's not the dishes of old America that interest Liberman. Colonists ate a lot of meat: boiled meat, stewed meat, meat baked into pie. At TBD, Liberman is creating a "vegetable driven" menu that highlights the local produce of the Bay Area's microclimates. Unlike the colonists, he won't be roasting pigeons.

Instead, Lieberman is fascinated by the traditional tools and techniques early settlers used for cooking without gas or electric stoves. Everything at TBD will be cooked on a hearth or grill or with a smoker, and Liberman is looking for creative ways to adapt tools from the past for his nouveau, distinctly Northern Californian menu.

"They used a lot of knicknacks that don't pertain to modern cooking. Stuff that they're like, 'This is for grilling a pear!'" he says. "But they also had a lot of tools that were really cool."

Part of the excitement over TBD is that Liberman is figuring it out as he goes along. To sauté his squid on an open hearth, he's discovered an old-fashioned chestnut roaster does the trick. (It resembles a little wok on a long handle.) "We're looking at equipment thinking, 'How many applications can we get out of that?'" he says. His menu will rely on old-world staples like preserved fruits and baked beans, but finished dishes will feel modern. "We're not going to replicate what they ate in the 1800s," Liberman says. "Its interesting, but it's not what most people want to eat."

HANG

▸ **FOREIGN CINEMA**
True to its name, this airy Mission District bistro (beloved for its ultra-pickley Persian bloody marys) shows foreign and indie flicks on its covered patio most nights. It also boasts a modern-art gallery for a post-brunch stroll. *2534 Mission St., foreigncinema.com*

SLEEP

▸ **THE INTER-CONTINENTAL**
This sparkly SoMa skyscraper offers incredible bay views and an easy walk to Sightglass coffee on Seventh Street. (Disclosure: We're addicts.) For longer journeys, hop in a hybrid Zipcar from the hotel's own fleet. *888 Howard St., intercontinentalsan-francisco.com*

WANDER

▸ **RECOLOGY SCULPTURE GARDEN**
Only in California does a municipal waste disposal company also house a three-acre sculpture garden. Artists in residence contribute new works to the park each year. Tours are available by reservation. *415-330-1414, RecologySF.com*

ALAMY (VEGETABLES); COURTESY FOREIGN CINEMA AND THE INTERCONTINENTAL (BAR, HOTEL)

Kelp Wanted

An underwater garden in Long Island Sound is making waves in the sustainable seafood industry. To find out how, we visited **ocean farmer Bren Smith.**

What attracted you to the sea?
I grew up in an 11-house fishing village in Newfoundland. My dad had a lobster boat. We were real back-to-the-landers and would shoot moose from the kitchen window. It was hardcore living. I quit school when I was 14 to start fishing full-time.

Why did you go from fishing to ocean farming?
While I was working in commercial fishing, the cod stocks in my hometown crashed. Everyone was thrown out of work. Today, there are hundreds of thousands of fishermen out of work; there's 80 percent unemployment. There are fewer tuna in the sea due to overfishing, and we go farther to catch fewer. We use helicopters, and we catch the worst fish out there. It's as effective as chasing down cows with Mack trucks. Eating sea veggies reduces pressure on fish stocks. We have to reimagine our ocean economy in order to survive. Let's do some ocean vegetarianism. Let's eat what fish eat.

What exactly is an ocean farm?
I have the first 3-D underwater farm (Thimble Island Oyster Co.) using the whole water column. It functions as an artificial reef. I have oysters and clams in cages on the bottom and scallops, mussels, and seaweed hanging on lines [to the surface]. Kelp is the second-fastest-growing plant in the world, and it grows to be 12 feet long. It has insane productivity with a small footprint. I call growing shellfish and seaweed a farm because a garden sounds like something a hedge fund investor has as a hobby.

But what's the market for kelp?
There's zero market for kelp; I have to help create it. It's a good thing for chefs. How often do you find an exotic, highly unexplored species right in your backyard? They get to play with something new and make kelp fettuccine, kelp butter, kelp ice cream, kelp cocktails. We can also use kelp for fish food, animal feed, and organic fertilizer. Kelp is fed to Olympic horses.

Could other people do what you've done?
All you need is 22 feet of water, deep or shallow. There's really low overhead, and you can easily scale up if you do some local ecosystem analysis. You could do this farming in the middle of the ocean. But the permit process took two years and cost $3,000. The instructions are 48 pages long.

What are your biggest challenges?
My hands are like sandpaper after so many years of fishing. I can't touch my girlfriend! I lost 80 percent of my crop during Hurricane Sandy. But the best thing in my life is utter failure. Hurricane Irene wiped out my farm. I realized if this extreme weather is the new normal, I've got to adapt in a way that's restorative. So now I'm in the business of ecological redemption.

> "The best thing in my life is utter failure."

$7.1 BILLION ▸ Size of the total global seaweed industry. Only a few companies are based in the U.S; most are Asian.

24 TONS ▸ Amount of kelp Smith can grow in his 300-by-300-foot area in just five months.

55K SHELLFISH ▸ Quantity of oysters, etc. Smith has sold this year to restaurants like New York City's ACME.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW HETHERINGTON, ISTOCK (FORK)

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101 MASTERPIECES #64 CALVIN AND HOBBES

Eye of the Tiger

HOW A STUBBORN ARTISTIC VISION MADE "CALVIN AND HOBBES" THE GREATEST COMIC STRIP OF ALL TIME.

BY JAKE ROSSEN

BILL WATTERSON, the writer and artist behind the wildly popular comic strip "Calvin and Hobbes," is famously private. He isn't prone to talking with reporters or fans, and he guards his home address carefully. So when a mysterious package landed on his doorstep in the mid-'80s, Watterson was understandably upset. When he opened the box, he was even more infuriated. Staring up at him was a stuffed tiger.

The package was from Dakin, a novelty toy company that had grown fat turning Garfield into a nearly billion-dollar licensing franchise. For years, Dakin had been pursuing Watterson, trying to make plush toys out of his beloved cartoon creations, but Watterson had steadfastly refused. This was the company's latest attempt, and it wasn't working.

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Watterson's perfectionist tendencies coupled with his fierce commitment to protecting the spirit of "Calvin and Hobbes" made it the last great comic strip of the 20th century. Sweet and sardonic, it appealed to adults and children alike. Six-year-old Calvin displayed an unflappable wonder infused with skepticism for grown-up conventions and a unique worldview that perfectly echoed that of his creator. To Watterson, the idea of reducing his characters to window decals and stuffed toys was horrifying. It was later rumored that, upon unpacking the offending Hobbes, he set the doll ablaze.

"Not exactly," he tells *mental_floss* via e-mail, in one of the first interviews he's granted since the strip ended. "It was only my head that burst into flames."

WILLIAM B. WATTERSON WAS BORN in July 1958 to James, a patent attorney, and Kathryn, a city councilwoman. He was raised in Chagrin Falls, Ohio, on a formative diet of "Peanuts" collections. The young Watterson doodled every chance he got, a pastime he continued to pursue at Kenyon College, where he decided to re-create the Sistine Chapel's "Creation of Adam" on his dorm room ceiling. When the administration reminded him that he'd have to paint over his masterpiece at the end of the school year, it didn't bother him. Watterson simply finished the piece, admired it for a few weeks, and covered it with fresh paint when he left. After graduating in 1980 with a degree in political science, he was hired by *The Cincinnati Post* to draw editorial cartoons.

Though landing a day job as a cartoonist had always been a dream of Watterson's, the gig wasn't a fit. Within a few months, he was fired. To make ends meet, he produced layouts for a local discount circular and cartooned on the side. After five years of generating strip ideas and collecting rejections, he submitted a comic that featured two lively minor characters—a stuffed tiger and a kid named Marvin. The United Feature Syndicate saw potential but asked Watterson to shift the strip's focus to the kid and resubmit. When it was ultimately rejected, Watterson showed the strip—now christened "Calvin and Hobbes" for theologian John Calvin and philosopher Thomas Hobbes—to Lee Salem at Universal Press Syndicate.

"Is this as good as I think it is?" the editor wondered.

Watterson recalls "Calvin and Hobbes" debuting in 35 papers (though Salem puts the number closer to 100) on November 18, 1985. With his dinner-roll-shaped feet and anarchically spiky hair, the young hero observed the world with reckless curiosity and an adult's vocabulary. Indeed, much of the strip's humor came from its expert fusion of existential thinking with a certain innocence. One installment would see Calvin quoting Karl Marx, pondering whether "religion is the opiate of the masses," before he catatonically plopped himself in front of a TV for the rest of the afternoon; the next, he might be tormenting his secret crush, Susie Derkins, with talk of "mouse loaf" sandwiches and a "thermos full of phlegm."

> "I COULDN'T TAKE THE STRIP WITH ME IF I QUIT OR PREVENT THE SYNDICATE FROM REPLACING ME, SO I WAS SCARED I WAS GOING TO LOSE EVERYTHING I CARED ABOUT."

But what resonated most with audiences was the strip's realism. "Calvin and Hobbes" was a chronicle of everyday drudgery—school, bath time, family camping trips—and Calvin's heroic efforts to vanquish that monotony using his imagination. Parental persecution or the drone of a teacher's voice often launched Calvin and his stuffed sidekick (who talked only when no one else was around) into fantasy worlds. And he had a cast of alter egos—astronaut Spaceman Spiff, detective Tracer Bullet, comic-book hero Stupendous Man—ready to help him escape.

Watterson's genius wasn't just creating great storylines, though. A student of comics, Watterson drew from an eclectic set of influences. He admired the woodcuts of German expressionists and the sprawling, dreamy fantasies of Little Nemo. He used the world around him as well—desert canyon hikes with his brother, Tom, inspired Martian landscapes for Calvin's adventures as Spiff.

The result was a strip that was vibrant, accessible, and beautiful. Within two years, more than 300 newspapers were running it and readers frequently ranked it as their favorite in surveys. "It was the only strip papers would call to buy sight unseen," Salem says.

The 1980s had seen comics mature beyond the quaint mid-century gags of "Blondie" and "Beetle Bailey." Gary Larson's single-panel strip "The Far Side" brought an irreverent absurdist perspective to the funnies. "Calvin and Hobbes" took the trend even further, marrying warm, engaging narrative with smart social commentary. When Calvin builds a snowman gazing at a snowball, he tells Hobbes the sculpture

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is "contemplating snowman evolution. If he evolved from a snowball, it raises tough theological questions for him." Physically, it may have been just one panel over from Garfield sitting in a pan of lasagna, but thematically, it was a world away.

When "Calvin and Hobbes" debuted, it caught the eye of cartoonist Matt Groening, who had been drawing his weekly strip "Life in Hell" for years and was on the verge of turning *The Simpsons* into an animated prime-time phenomenon. "It was an incredibly well drawn, virtuoso strip," Groening says. "Dailies are very frustrating because artists are given so little space to flaunt their wares, but it was clear Watterson knew how to use it for wonderfully executed stuff."

IN 1987, WATTERSON RELEASED his first book collection, which promptly sold more than a million copies. As sales soared, a jubilant Salem called to discuss plans for a 15-city, three-week book tour.

Watterson had a counteroffer. "No weeks and no cities," he said and hung up the phone.

A self-described misanthrope, Watterson was content to let the work speak for itself. Invitations to meet Steven Spielberg and George Lucas were met with polite refusals. Watterson was the youngest winner of the Reuben Award, cartooning's Oscar, but he declined to attend the ceremony each of the three times he was nominated. Although he had previously cooperated with a handful of newspaper and magazine profiles, he had now effectively put himself on media quarantine. When he did agree to do press, there was an ulterior motive. "It was early," Watterson says, "when my desire to air my grievances with the business temporarily outweighed my desire for privacy."

Those grievances were draining Watterson's energy. As "Calvin and Hobbes" surged in popularity, the Universal Syndicate and potential licensees saw an overgrown money tree in Watterson's backyard. "We desperately tried to get him to work on a license with us," says Harold Nizamian, CEO of Dakin at the time. "We gave him a hundred reasons why he would benefit, but he refused to commercialize his creation." Nizamian speculates that if Watterson had enjoyed even a fraction of Garfield's success on store shelves, he would've netted millions in royalties.

But as Watterson explains, it was far more complicated than just saying no. "I had signed most of my rights away in order to get syndicated, so I had no control over what happened to my own work," Watterson says. "I had no legal position to argue anything. I could not take the strip with me if I quit or even prevent the syndicate from replacing me, so I was truly scared I was going to lose everything I cared about either way."

Watterson used his comic strip to explore these frustrations, and occasionally Calvin would muse on the tug-of-war battle between art and commerce. Meanwhile, bootleggers profited with unlicensed T-shirts—and, more infamously, a crude car window decal of Calvin urinating on a Ford logo.

Five years in, it became clear to Universal that Watterson was not going to offer his blessing on toys. "We had a lot of internal discussions," Salem says. Legally, the company could have proceeded without Watterson's permission. But, as Salem said, "ultimately, [we] decided it was in our best interests not to alienate the best cartoonist of his generation."

With some regret, Universal renegotiated Watterson's contract from 20 years to 10 and signed over the domestic copyright to the strip in 1991. At last, Watterson now had complete autonomy over his work.

He took a nine-month sabbatical and then came back in full force, petitioning for a half page of real estate for his Sunday installments. Editors balked at Watterson's hubris, and newspapers threatened to cancel, but few did. In the extra panes, Calvin's imagination grew bigger and bolder, with dinosaurs swooping in on F-14s

Essential "Calvin and Hobbes" Numbers

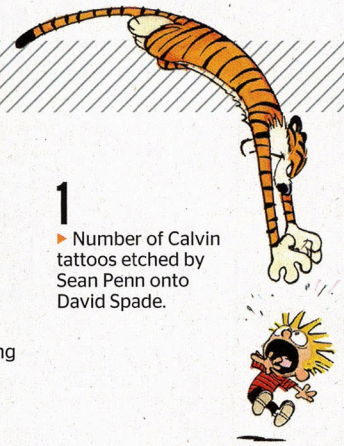
$737,000
▸ Amount Universal was awarded in a judgment against a bootleg T-shirt manufacturer.

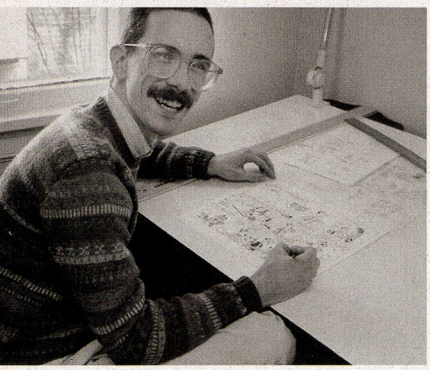
$203,150
▸ Amount paid for an original Sunday strip at a 2012 comic-art auction.

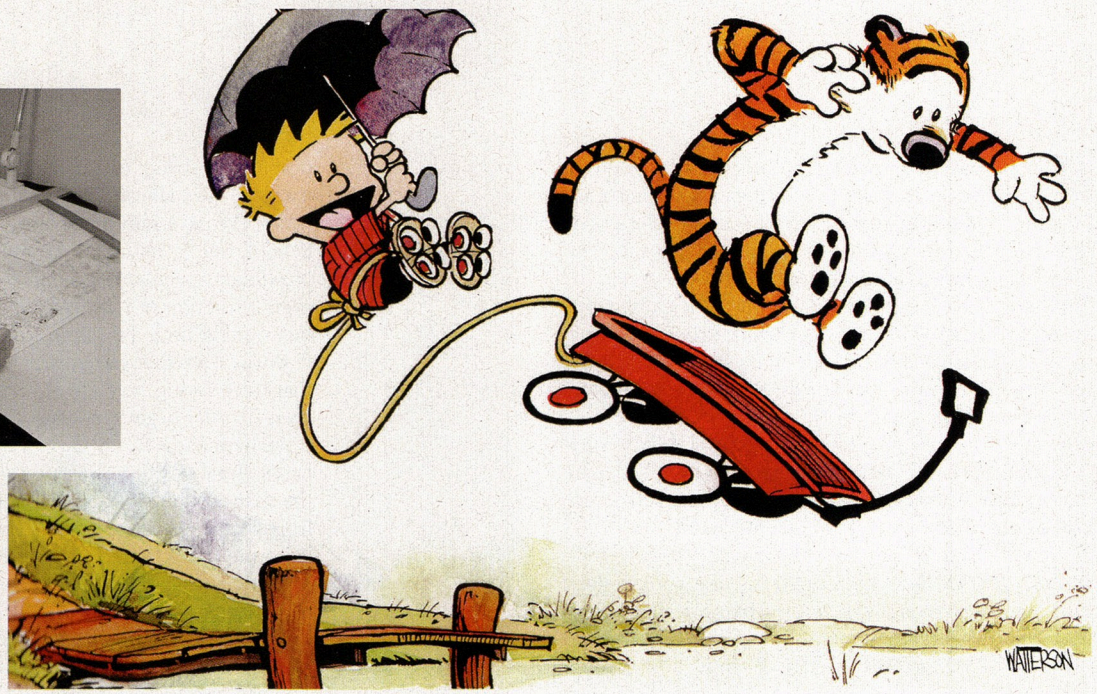
3,160
▸ Total number of original "Calvin and Hobbes" strips. Of these, more than 3,000 have been lent to Ohio State University for safekeeping.

$1,495
▸ Amount paid on eBay for a rare copy of *Teaching With Calvin and Hobbes*, a 1993 textbook for children with learning disabilities.

1
▸ Number of Calvin tattoos etched by Sean Penn onto David Spade.







"See if you can run it without a 30-year-old photo of me!" Watterson wrote to writer Jake Rossen, in one of his first interviews in years. Our apologies, Mr. Watterson!

and alien landscapes taking on new scope. Depending on Calvin's flights of fancy, Watterson would broaden his art style to include Neo-Cubism or romance-novel archetypes. It was ambition unseen since the 1920s heyday of comics.

JUST 10 YEARS INTO ITS RUN, "Calvin and Hobbes" was a baby in an industry where strips can outlive their creators and run for generations. It had become universally adored, appearing in 2,400 newspapers across the globe. But stretching his works across the Sunday pages would be Watterson's last attempt at evolving the art form. He did not intend to overstay his welcome.

In 1995, he mailed a letter to newspaper editors notifying them that he would be ending the strip in December. "My interests have shifted," he wrote, "and I believe I've done what I can do within the constraints of daily deadlines and small panels."

Fans howled when they heard of his decision to retire, but Watterson was not to be swayed. The strip's finale on December 31 featured Calvin and Hobbes setting off on a sled to explore parts unknown.

Nearly two decades later, reader enthusiasm for the strip hasn't receded. At 23 pounds, 2005's *The Complete Calvin and Hobbes* may be the heaviest *New York Times* bestseller in history; fan art and essays populate the web; some have even taken to animating the strip for YouTube, which Watterson views with suspicion. "I assume they're either homages or satiric riffs and are not intended to be taken too seriously as works in their own right," he says.

Naturally, plenty of companies have approached Watterson to adapt his comics for TV or the big screen, but he remains a purist. "The visual sophistication of Pixar blows me away, but I have zero interest in animating 'Calvin and Hobbes,'" he says. "If you've ever compared a film to a novel it's based on, you know the novel gets bludgeoned. As a comic strip, 'Calvin and Hobbes' works exactly the way I intended it to. There's no upside for me in adapting it."

> "'CALVIN AND HOBBES' CREATED A LEVEL OF EXPECTATION I DON'T KNOW HOW TO PROCESS."

Now 55, Watterson has remained out of the public eye, painting but not exhibiting any work. "My first problem is that I don't paint ambitiously," he says. "It's all catch and release—just tiny fish that aren't really worth the trouble to clean and cook. But my second problem is that 'Calvin and Hobbes' created a level of attention and expectation that I don't know how to process."

That attention is unlikely to fade anytime soon. "Calvin and Hobbes" seems destined to remain a treasured part of childhood for past and future generations. And along the way, every line, word, and idea was his own, undiluted by the licensing committees or ghostwriters typical of the comics page.

"It had a psychological resonance very few strips have," Groening says. "[Watterson] had something to say about the more troubling things in life. When he left, he left a huge hole."

Watterson is content to let others figure out the strip's place in the pantheon of cartooning. Despite having the attention of millions, he never anticipated more than a modest living as a cartoonist. What people take away from the strip, he once observed, is up to them. Much like that dorm-room Sistine Chapel, "Calvin and Hobbes" remains firmly in his rearview.

"You can't really blame people for preferring more of what they already know and like," he says of the enduring cry for more. "The trade-off, of course, is that predictability is boring. Repetition is the death of magic." ✱

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SO MANY QUESTIONS

The Memory Master

NELSON DELLIS isn't just good with names—he can commit 50 faces to memory in less time than it will take you to read this article. Oh, and one time he climbed Mount Everest! Jeff Rubin[1] discovers how a former software developer conquered his wandering mind.

JEFF RUBIN: So "memory athlete"—that's the term.

NELSON DELLIS: Oh, yeah. Memory athlete or mental athlete.

JR: Can you describe the event where you were crowned memory champ?

ND: People are always surprised when they hear there's a championship for memory. The USA Memory Championship is held every year in New York City. In the morning, whoever wants to sign up can sign up. It's basically a full day with four events. There's memorizing random names and faces. They give you pictures of random strangers with crazy names, and you have 15 minutes to memorize as many of them as you can.

JR: That's so practical! That's something that comes up in everyday life that people struggle with.

ND: Exactly. That's probably the number one useful thing I've gotten out of this: how to remember people's names.

JR: So if they give you a stack of head shots, what's the average score for this? How many is a good number to memorize?

ND: You get a point for the first name and another point for the last. So you could do just first names, just last names, or both. Touching 100 points is pretty good.

JR: You have how long to memorize all those faces?

ND: Fifteen minutes.

JR: So to memorize 100 names and faces in 15 minutes is pretty good.

ND: That's more like 50 actual faces, but yeah, first and last names. That would give you 100 points—100 individual names.

JR: How long have you been training?

ND: I started about four years ago.

JR: That's pretty new. I actually assumed you'd been working on it much longer. No one wins the figure skating championship after four years of figure skating.

ND: That's the crazy thing about this memory thing. You learn the technique—which is super easy. You can read about it in a book or online, and then it's just practice. You get really good really fast. When I first started, I was like, "I have a crappy memory. Maybe I can do this but never at the level of these champion guys." And then within six months—and this is me doing it every day, but still—I was up at the top. I don't know if it's because it's actually something we can all do very easily or because it's still kind of an underground world and the competition isn't really saturated at the top yet.

JR: Before you started training, you thought of yourself as having a bad memory. I think most people think that about themselves. So what made you start training?

ND: I started because of my grandmother. She had Alzheimer's disease, and she passed away in 2009, about the same time I started getting into this memory stuff. Once she passed away, I was kind of like, "Well, let me see how far I can take all these techniques that I've just learned, and maybe I can actually turn these techniques and skills into habits, and maybe when I'm older I won't end up the same way." So that drove me to do it, and the more I did it, the better I got. It's one of these things that the more you do it, you see just how powerful your brain can be. You just crave getting stronger in your mind.

JR: Are you the only memory champion to have scaled Mount Everest? I don't even know how to begin researching something like that.

ND: Yeah, from what I know. I don't know anybody else who's a climber and a memory athlete.

JR: You said you practice every day, so you were practicing on Everest. Does it get harder as the air gets thinner?

ND: No, that was kind of the reason I did it. I wanted to see—places where you're not going to get as much oxygen, what is that going to do? Actually, I got faster the higher I went. It's super counterintuitive, because you think, "OK, you're going to get dumber as you go." For the most part, you do; your decision making process isn't as quick or as sound, but for some reason, these techniques are just so strong that I guess they're very difficult to break. I think

[1]Host of *The Jeff Rubin Jeff Rubin Show* (jeffrubinjeffrubinshow.com), occasionally forgetful

In 2012, Dellis broke a U.S. record (his own) by memorizing 303 random digits in five minutes.

COURTESY NELSON DELLIS

a big part of it is that it's so simple out there. It's just you and no distractions.

JR: Tell me more about your Alzheimer's charity. What is currently going on with Climb for Memory?

ND: Right now, we're trying to figure out the next big climb.

JR: What do you do after you've climbed Everest?

ND: Well, I lost a lot of weight, so I eat a lot. That's number one. And then when I come back, I'm usually like, "I never want to climb again." It's so demanding and miserable. But a week after that, I'm like, "What's next? What's the next big peak I'm going to go for?" We're trying to figure that out, and we'll start pushing the fundraising and different events for Alzheimer's.

JR: What do those funds go to? How do you support Alzheimer's?

ND: We work with the Alzheimer's Association. Specifically, I work a lot with the Southeast Florida chapter down here in Miami. So the majority of the funds go to them and their efforts.

JR: Do you think that our memories are getting worse, or maybe memory's becoming less important because we're outsourcing so much of that to computers? I used to know phone numbers. Now, all that's in my contacts.

ND: Oh, for sure. You just said it—you noticed that now you don't remember phone numbers. Back when we had to maybe look up a number in a book, we knew more in our mind. You just knew a bunch by muscle memory on the dial pad.

JR: Do you think that's necessarily bad?

ND: I think it's bad. Obviously, it allows you to do more with your mental space, I guess, but I feel like it forces us to rely on more things and not use our brain. I'm a big fan of trying to hold things in the mind and having to calculate things. Even if it's hard for me, I like to do it, because I feel like you get better at it the more you do it. If you don't do it, then [your brain's] just going to get lazier.

JR: Do you have any practical advice for people who struggle with that?

ND: Honestly, the biggest piece of advice I can give—and this will help the majority of people remember more names at least by 50 percent—is just paying attention or trying.

JR: It sounds so simple, but that's a good point.

ND: When you're going to a party or a dinner, make it a goal or a game: "I'm going to remember 10 people's names" or "everybody at the table's names." And just by saying that to yourself, you'll find that your memory's actually a lot better. Because you're making this effort, and you're focusing. Basically, the techniques that we use are these elaborate systems of intense focus. For me, to take all this time to convert a name into a picture and really study this picture's face is really just me paying a lot of attention. ⊛

DANGERLAB!

ESCAPE FROM KASAI-ORIENTAL

IN AFRICA TO CONTAIN A RENEGADE VIRUS, A RESEARCHER ENCOUNTERS SOMETHING EVEN SCARIER. **BY ALI S. KHAN** AS TOLD TO JED LIPINSKI

ZAIRE, 1997—Monkeypox is back. A close relative of smallpox, the deadly disease causes fever, headaches, muscle aches, swollen lymph nodes, and a rash that develops into bumps. It has been under control since the early '90s, but in the remote province of Kasai-Oriental, we've learned of at least 92 new cases, the largest outbreak on record.

The World Health Organization is concerned. Extremely concerned. Years ago, studies suggested that monkeypox would not spread widely among people. The smallpox vaccine appeared to prevent it. Now WHO isn't so sure.

In February, WHO and the Centers for Disease Control send 12 of us to Zaire to investigate. The problem is that Zaire—which later became the Democratic Republic of the Congo—is in the midst of a brutal civil war. We learn the rebel leader, Laurent-Desire Kabila, is marching toward Kinshasa, the capital city, to overthrow the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko. The United States Embassy tells us not to worry: "Mobutu's going to rout the rebel forces." We're told they'll be on the other side of the country. So we go.

Getting to Kasai-Oriental is not easy. Our local guides cut a track through the jungle with machetes. They lay wood planks and bamboo across a rickety river bridge for our vehicles to cross. When we arrive, we immediately begin assessing the extent of the outbreak, taking blood samples from people and animals in the area, including Gambian rats and tree squirrels, which are thought to be reservoirs for the virus. Everything is running smoothly.

◂ **ALI S. KHAN** has worked for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for 23 years and has served as the director of the Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response since 2010.

ILLUSTRATION BY MIKE BYERS

Then a kid on a motorbike shows up. He tells us Kabila's forces have driven the Zairean army into retreat. The army has not been paid in months. Its soldiers are known to loot, pillage, and kill.

Our first instinct is to flee into the forest. We instead call the American Embassy and are advised to terminate our investigation and evacuate immediately. "They'll probably take your vehicles and gear," we're told. "But they won't kill you."

We'd rather not take that chance.

Members of our team are still spread out collecting samples, so I dispatch some villagers to round them up. We consolidate the samples into a single tank of liquid nitrogen and dump the other tanks. We abandon our truck and take our two 4x4s, setting out for a red dirt airstrip 75 miles away.

A few miles later, we're making good time. But then we arrive at our first river crossing, and the convoy stops short. To avoid the rickety bridge on the way in, we'd taken an alternate route. But this route has no bridge at all. Panic ensues. Will we have to swim across and travel the rest of the way by foot? No. The locals have rigged a river-crossing apparatus. They latch our vehicles to giant flatbed pontoons and use currents and a manual cable system to ferry us to the opposite bank.

Eight hours later, we pull into the town of Lodja. We place a satellite call to our contacts in Kinshasa. They inform us that a French film crew is flying into Lodja the next day to shoot a documentary for WHO. We are overjoyed.

The following morning, a 30-seat twin-propeller plane touches down on the dirt runway. Dozens of villagers have appeared for the occasion. They don't want to stick around to greet Kabila or the retreating Zairean army either. As we board, the more desperate ones try to pile inside. The tiny aircraft simply can't accommodate them. A security guard fires a warning shot into the air, forcing them to retreat. We want to take them, but there simply isn't room.

"THEY'LL PROBABLY TAKE YOUR VEHICLES AND GEAR," WE'RE TOLD. "BUT THEY WON'T KILL YOU."

At last, our group—which has added a few local missionaries, some guides, and an entomologist—is en route. It is not a pleasant flight. Pounding rain and vicious turbulence throw the plane around like a toy. The liquid nitrogen tank bounces around the cabin. I worry that it will knock out the control mechanisms and send us into a nosedive before we make it to Kinshasa. A French physician scribbles a farewell note to his family. Somehow we make it alive.

Back in Atlanta, we learn that the village in Kasai-Oriental was raided just two days after we left. In the lab, we determine that the outbreak was caused by the cessation of smallpox vaccinations following its global eradication in 1970. This left the locals susceptible to monkeypox. Fortunately, we find no evidence to suggest that person-to-person transmission alone can sustain monkeypox in a local population. While the political threats in Zaire loom, there's relief in knowing this outbreak will soon be contained. ❋

STAT ATTACK!

Infectious Diseases

72
people were infected with monkeypox in a 2003 outbreak spread by prairie dogs in Illinois.

13
U.S. facilities have biosafety level 4 labs for handling outbreaks for which there is no treatment or vaccine.

75
percent of recently emerging infectious diseases among humans have originated in animals.

It was an African-dwarf-frog breeding facility in California.

1
source was responsible for a salmonella outbreak that lasted from 2009 to 2011.

30
new contagious diseases have been investigated by the CDC in the last years.

The Rhyme Scheme

T.S. ELIOT WAS POISED TO BE THE TOP POET OF HIS GENERATION. BUT FIRST HE HAD TO BE RESCUED FROM HIS DAY JOB.

BY PAUL COLLINS

IN 1921, suffering from a "nervous disorder," T.S. Eliot took a three-month hiatus from his day job. The 33-year-old had been working as a clerk in the London sub-basement of Lloyds Bank for four years. But with the luxury of time, the part-time poet focused his attention on completing his magnum opus, "The Waste Land."

Released in 1922, Eliot's haunting and defiantly oblique work is a landmark of modernism; even at its most impenetrable, one reviewer admitted that Eliot's work possessed "the music of ideas." Ezra Pound, too, was impressed. Convinced of Eliot's genius, Pound reckoned that the grunt work was smothering his creativity. "Some of us consider Eliot's employment in a bank the worst waste in contemporary literature," Pound bemoaned.

Of course, financing poetry is a problem as old as poetry itself. For Emily Dickinson or Lord Byron, the answer was simple—being born into the right family relieved them of the worry. Others turned to hack

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN UELAND, ALAMY (PLATH); GETTY IMAGES (ANGELOU)

writing to stock the till. Walt Whitman penned a temperance tract while guzzling cheap wine. Edgar Allan Poe cranked out newspaper filler like "Why Not Try a Mineralized Pavement?" When William Wordsworth landed a decidedly unromantic job as a tax collector, he could take comfort in the knowledge that Geoffrey Chaucer had been a customs comptroller in the 14th century. "There's no money in poetry," Robert Graves once observed, "but then there's no poetry in money either."

Pound was out to change that. He wanted to help Eliot write for a living instead of squandering his talents at the bank, but he was skeptical that members of high society would open their purses for such edgy writing. "We can't expect illiterate, newly rich millionaires to pay for things they have not the taste to enjoy," he scoffed. Instead, he hatched a revolutionary plan to crowdsource a fund for Eliot.

He dubbed his campaign Bel Esprit and started by drawing up a brochure. In it, he asked "subscribers" to pledge about $50 a year. The goal was to support Eliot for five years at $1,500 a year—the bare minimum he'd need to quit his job and do nothing but write.

Pound proved to be an ideal fundraiser. An opinionated and fiery poet, the Ph.D. dropout (who sometimes wore a sombrero over his wild red hair) was a tireless advocate for fellow artists. And he was quick to stress that his plan was not charity. "I can't come back too STRONGLY to the point that I do NOT consider this Eliot subsidy a pension," he wrote to one donor. "I am puke sick of the idea of pensions, taking care of old crocks. ... I put this money into him, as I wd. put into a shoe factory if I wanted shoes." To Pound, Bel Esprit was an investment in poetry, and he expected it to yield dividends to all humanity. He wasn't the only one. Pound managed to convince a number of artist friends—including the poet William Carlos Williams, himself working a day job as a New Jersey pediatrician—to pledge. Ernest Hemingway, too, helped raise funds but then blew the cash at a racetrack.

Things were progressing nicely until Pound's plan hit a major snag. It turned out that Eliot didn't want to quit his job! He liked being employed by the bank and actually took pleasure in his work.

Pound should have seen this coming. Aldous Huxley once declared Eliot "the most bank-clerky of all bank clerks." Virginia Woolf joked that he was so stiff and buttoned up that he'd attend informal lunches "in a four-piece suit." Not only did Eliot appreciate the steady paycheck, but Lloyds meant a solid pension for him and his ailing wife, Vivienne. She, too, didn't want him to quit. "If he did take such steps," Vivienne warned, "I should bear him a considerable grudge."

Still, Eliot wasn't averse to support—at least, until the plan leaked to *The Liverpool Post*, which falsely claimed that he'd already taken the donations and ungratefully kept his job anyway. *The Chicago Daily Tribune* and *The New York Tribune* picked up the story, with the latter mocking that "To coddle an author is to reduce him to the level of a Pekingese."

Eliot was mortified. Fearful for his Lloyds job, he demanded a retraction from *The Liverpool Post*. The paper complied.

History generally has Bel Esprit dying there—but in fact, Pound hadn't quite given up. He removed Eliot's name but still stumped for Bel Esprit to *Poetry* magazine and *The New York Times*. When an Ohio high school English teacher inquired about it in August 1923, Pound still sounded hopeful that Eliot would accept the funds. And later that year, he did: two installments amounting to about $550 found their way into his account. Soon thereafter, Pound dropped out of sight, and with him, all plans for Bel Esprit vanished too.

HEMINGWAY HELPED RAISE FUNDS—BUT THEN BLEW THE CASH AT A RACETRACK.

As it turned out, Eliot didn't need Bel Esprit. In 1925, he left Lloyds—"the prospect of staying there for the rest of my life is abominable to me," he conceded—to take a job as an editor at a publishing house. Pound's faith in him would be amply confirmed when the former bank clerk won a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1948.

Perhaps the Bel Esprit plan was simply ahead of its time. Today, websites like Kickstarter fund poet's dreams by cold-calling the masses, treating each donation as an investment. One recent appeal for the Line Assembly Poetry Tour and Documentary mustered $18,888 on the slogan "Six poets. One van. No quit." Ezra Pound would certainly approve. ❀

POETS AT WORK

SYLVIA PLATH
Psych-ward receptionist

▶ The preeminent confessional poet of her generation was glad to land a temp job in Boston during a dry spell in 1958. Coincidentally, it was in the same psych ward where she'd been committed five years earlier.

MAYA ANGELOU
Streetcar conductor

▶ Even before she was a 1950s calypso singer, Angelou was a teenager who loved San Francisco's streetcar-worker uniforms. After weeks of pestering, she was hired as the first African-American woman to work the streetcars. Angelou's mother was proud, but cautious: She tailed the route with a pistol, just in case.

LEW WELCH
Mad man

▶ This Beat poet turned up in a Kerouac novel, inspired his stepson's musical stage name, "Huey Lewis," and roomed with poets Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Gary Snyder. As a copywriter in the 1950s, he also coined the famous poetic slogan "Raid kills bugs dead."

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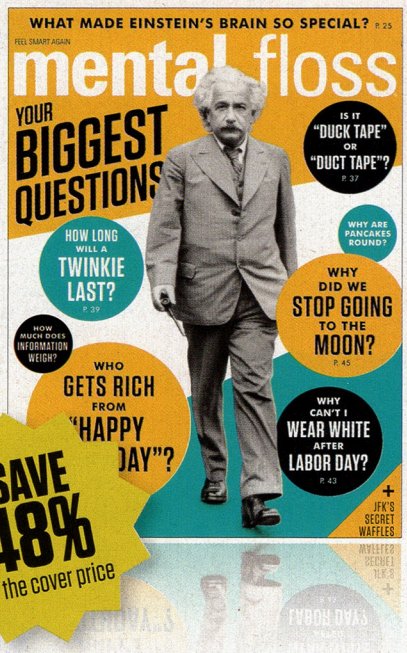
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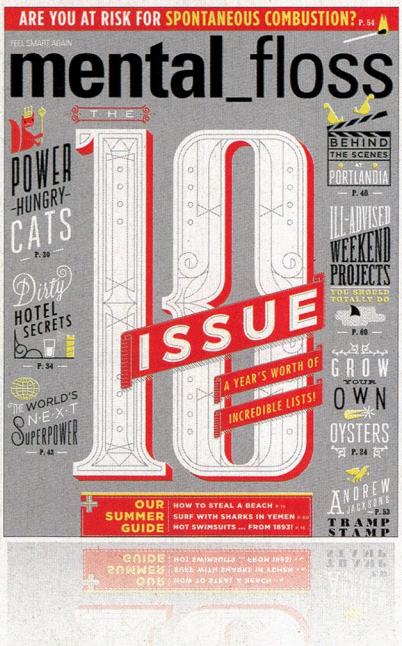
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OK, "Need to Know Right Now" might be a bit dramatic. But "323 Amazing Facts You'll Probably Enjoy That Will Likely Prove Useful During Awkward Silences" didn't fit.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
PHIL WRIGGLESWORTH

1. The cotton candy machine was invented by a dentist.

2. Thirty-five percent of people are born without wisdom teeth.

3. As we continue to evolve, scientists believe that fewer and fewer humans will be born with wisdom teeth ...

4. ... or appendixes ...

5. ... or even little toes!

6. One thing we'll always need? Coffee, which is called a cup of joe because American GIs guzzled the stuff during World War II.

7. Espresso was too strong for the soldiers, so they watered it down. The Americano was born.

8. The American Psychiatric Association's DSM-V handbook classifies caffeine withdrawal as a mental disorder.

9. Catnip isn't just for housecats—it affects lions and tigers too!

10. In 1879, a Belgian village attempted to train a fleet of 37 official mail cats to deliver letters.

11. It didn't work.

12. Twelve percent of sleepers dream in black and white.

13. Zebras' coats are just black.

14. (Their undercoat has white stripes.)

15. The light emitted by 200,000 galaxies makes our universe a shade of beige.

16. Scientists at Johns Hopkins University christened the color "cosmic latte."

17. The oldest star is nicknamed Methuselah. It's 13.8 billion years old.

18. If you open your eyes in a pitch-black room, the color you'll see is called *eigengrau*.

19. There may be no sound in space, but it does have a distinct smell: a bouquet of diesel fumes, gunpowder, and barbecue.

20. The aroma is mostly produced by dying stars.

21. Michael Jackson did not invent the moonwalk. It's existed since the 1930s.

22. Back then it was called the buzz.

23. Speaking of buzz, Colgate-Palmolive has a patent on a toothbrush that can administer caffeine.

24. Recent neuroscience research shows that your musical preferences are established by the time you turn 14.

25. The best way to get an "earworm" out of your head? Work on an anagram.

26. If your iPhone is out of juice, you can recharge it by linking it up lemon-battery-style to 595 oranges.

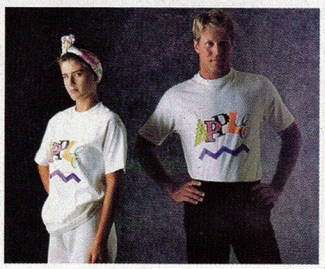
317. The Chinese government has paid out nearly $10 million in damages for disturbing people's feng shui with its inconsiderate construction.

27. Apple used to have a clothing line. Here are four of 1986's best looks:

28.

29.

30.

31. 

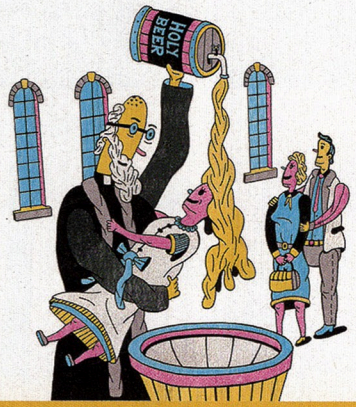
32. In Japan, letting a sumo wrestler make your baby cry is considered good luck.

33. Baby carrots first hit supermarkets 25 years ago.

34. Where do baby carrots come from? Ugly carrots. When a California farmer realized he was discarding 400 tons of carrots a day because they were too bent to be sold, he gave his harvest a makeover and shaved them down to snackable nubs.

35. Today, baby carrots are a $1 billion business.

36. Candy shop owner Debbie Ball made all the "meth" for the first two seasons of *Breaking Bad*. It was rock candy.



37. Until Pope Gregory IX took over in 1227, babies were sometimes baptized in beer.

38. Oreos are a knock-off of Hydrox cookies, which came out four years earlier (in 1908).

39. Ultimate Frisbee was invented by Joel Silver, the producer of *Die Hard* and *Lethal Weapon*.

40. Gary Kremen—the founder of Match.com—lost his girlfriend to a man she met on Match.com.

41. The creators of YouTube were originally trying to create a dating site called Tune In Hook Up.

42. When YouTube launched, the founders posted a Craigslist ad offering $100 to any hot girl who would post 10 or more videos.

43. No one responded.

44. One of the bestselling books in the 15th century was an erotic novel titled *The Tale of Two Lovers*.

45. Its author, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, would later become Pope Pius II.

46. Pope Leo X (1513–1521) was an atheist.

47. Prospective popes must speak at least three languages, including English and Italian.

48. It's easier to learn phrases in a foreign language if you sing them.

49. Airplane cabin air is about 12 percent humidity.

50. That's drier than most deserts!

51. In 2002, a campaign was launched to change the airport ID for Sioux City, Iowa, from SUX to something less offensive.

52. It failed.

53. The female G-spot was nearly named the Whipple Tickle, after professor Beverly Whipple.

54. In Iceland, it's hard to come up with a creative name for a newborn. A government committee prevents parents from giving babies names it deems too weird.

55. The committee's name? Mannanafnanefnd.

56. Halle Berry is named after the department store Halle Brothers.

(TOP FACTS) JINGYAO GUO

57. F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* was almost titled *The High Bouncing Lover.*

58. Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* was originally called *The Drunkards.*

59. Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* was initially pitched as *Where the Wild Horses Are.*

60. His editor loved the title, but Sendak couldn't draw horses.

61. The wild things he ended up drawing are caricatures of his relatives.

62. Peter the Great had a thing for dwarves. According to writer Stephen Marche, Peter once "cut open two pies, each containing a dwarf, who, together, danced an amusing minuet for the guests."

63. Dancing dwarves were a staple of ancient Egyptian funerals.

64. Several Egyptian mummies have been discovered wearing braces.

65. One ancient Roman was found wearing gold wires on his teeth—making him the first person in history to sport a blinged-out grill!

66. Kanye West dropped out of college and became a telemarketer.

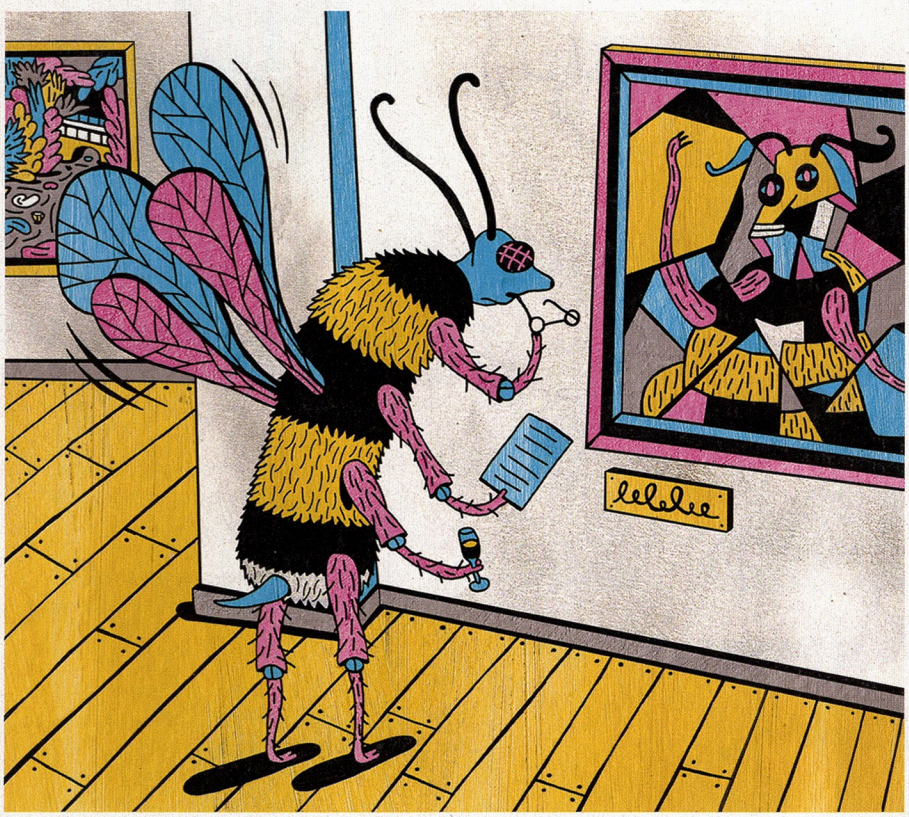
67. In 2011, Angelina Jolie bought Brad Pitt a California waterfall for his birthday.

68. If you visit a waterfall at dusk, you may see moonbows—nighttime rainbows.

69. In the original stage version of *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy's companion isn't Toto, but a cow named Imogene.

70. It was easier to fit a human into a cow costume than a dog one.

71. Thanks to a sophisticated visual system, honeybees can tell the difference between a Monet and a Picasso.



72. Swiss designers are working on a milk carton that changes color as its contents nears expiration.

73. The earliest hockey games used frozen cow dung for pucks.

74. The fastest non-manure slapshot ever recorded zoomed at 110.3 mph.

75. That's fast, but not as fast as the lightning bolt that struck Cleveland Indians pitcher Ray Caldwell in the ninth inning of a game in 1919.

76. Caldwell dusted himself off and retired the last batter for a 2–1 win.

77. Another Cleveland Indian, Joe Sewell, used one bat his entire 14-year career.

78. Tug-of-war used to be an Olympic event.

79. So was live pigeon shooting.

80. And painting.

318. The American Mustache Institute (AMI) was established in 1965 as the facial hair equivalent of the ACLU.

81. In the 1900 Olympics, swimmers raced through an obstacle course that included swimming under boats.

82. Goldfish can distinguish one composer from another.

83. The oldest existing recording is a 10-second snippet of Debussy's "Au Clair de la Lune" from 1860.

84. Music was happier back then. A 2012 AV Club study found that tunes are getting more depressing—the number of minor chords in pop songs has nearly doubled in the last 50 years.

85. After analyzing *Billboard* archives, researchers found that songs about love stay on the charts for an average of 9.4 weeks.

86. Hits that don't involve love last 11.4 weeks.

87. Ancient Romans used an herb called silphium as birth control.

88. It was so popular that the plant went extinct.

89. In 2008, Carl Mosca Dionisio strung together 18,500 latex condoms and used them to bungee jump from a 100-foot tower.

90. It worked!

91. A 2009 study found that when men interact with an attractive woman, they may become "cognitively impaired."

92. Further studies found that the mere thought of talking to a pretty girl increases a man's likelihood of saying something really, really stupid.

93. The average British man will drive an extra 276 miles per year because he's too stubborn to ask for directions.

94. In the U.K., tender sticks of rhubarb dipped in sugar were once a popular treat.

95. Rhubarb is technically a vegetable.

96. But in 1947, it was classified as a fruit to reduce tariffs on imported rhubarb.

97. The most shoplifted food item in the U.S. is candy.

98. In Europe, it's cheese.

99. In Latin America, it's meat.

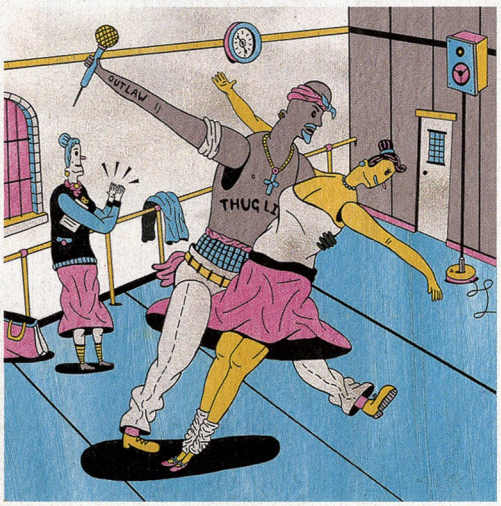
100. Some foods the media has declared to be the next cronut (but will not be the next cronut):

101. Ramen burgers

102. Flamin' Hot Cheetos pancake bacon

103. Deep-fried Kool-Aid

104. Frozen S'mores



105. Porckles (dill pickles filled with pulled pork)

106. The Cron Dog (a cronut-wrapped hot dog)

107. In 2010, Jimmy McMillan of the Rent Is Too Damn High Party got more than 40,000 votes for New York governor.

108. In 2011, he was served with an eviction notice from his rent-controlled New York City apartment.

109. In Nevada, "none of the above" is an option on ballots.

110. Why are U.S. elections on Tuesdays? The day was ideal because it let people get to church on Sunday, ride to the county seat on Monday, and vote before Wednesday, also known as market day.

111. In the past 20 years, Sweden's Donald Duck Party has tallied enough write-in votes to be the country's ninth most popular political organization.

112. Meanwhile, the country's Left Party has campaigned to make men sit when they pee.

113. (The campaign isn't going very well.)

114. In 2006, a Wisconsin man legally changed his name to Andy Griffith, hoping it would help him get elected as county sherriff.

115. Instead, he was sued by Andy Griffith.

116. Tupac studied ballet.

SNACK FACTS!

4 Things to Keep in Mind for That Awkward Moment of Silence at the Office Holiday Party

117. The original recipe for **mince pie** called for 13 ingredients—representing Christ and his 12 apostles—and required cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg (gifts from the Magi). Puritans dismissed it as "idolatry in a crust."

118. Around 1670, a German choirmaster supposedly gave children peppermint sticks to quiet them down. To make the sweets church appropriate, he hooked them into **canes** as a shout-out to the nativity's shepherds.

119. The Rueckheim brothers introduced **caramel corn** at the 1893 World's Fair, but it was so sticky that it was tough to eat. A few years later, they perfected a way to prevent clumping, and Cracker Jacks was born.

120. In the Middle Ages, **mulled wine** was known as *hippocras* because the spices were filtered through a conical linen bag called a *manicum hippocraticum* supposedly invented by Hippocrates.

121. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty forbids any nation from trying to own the moon.

122. There are no rules forbidding a country from building a golf course on the moon.

123. NASA's Alan Shepard is the only person to have golfed there.

124. Shepard whacked two balls with a six iron. They went "miles and miles and miles," he said. He also threw a javelin.

125. In 2008, the U.K.'s Susie Hewer knitted a scarf while running a marathon.

126. It was five feet, two inches long.

127. *The New York Times* illustrator Christoph Niemann doodled 46 sketches—in color—while running the New York City Marathon.

128. Juggling while jogging is also a marathon phenomenon.

129. It's called joggling.

130. The electronic game Simon, where players repeat the sequence of lit-up colored panels, debuted at Studio 54.

131. In the 1960s, Nintendo ran a pay-by-the-hour "love hotel" in Japan.

132. New Mexico is home to a mass grave of unsold Atari cartridges and consoles.

133. In 2013, Monopoly's iron token was replaced by a cat.

319. After commissioning a behavioral economics study, the AMI declared Chicago the most mustache-friendly town in America.

134. The iron wasn't the first one to get chucked. Other out-of-service Monopoly pieces include:

135. A lantern

136. A rocking horse

137. An elephant

138. A purse

139. In 2005, executives from Christie's and Sotheby's played a game of Rock Paper Scissors to determine who'd get to sell a $20 million art collection that included works by Picasso, Van Gogh, and Cézanne.

140. Christie's scissors beat Sotheby's paper.

141. To celebrate Andy Warhol's 85th birthday, the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh broadcast a streaming video of the artist's grave.

142. In 1953, during the Eisenhower administration, the White House was wired to play Muzak.

143. But Eisenhower wasn't even Muzak's biggest presidential fan. Lyndon Johnson owned an Austin franchise earlier that decade.

144. In the first edition of Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,* the Oompa Loompas weren't orange. They were black. Dahl described them as being from "deepest, darkest Africa, where no white man had ever been."

145. It was changed because the original was, well, racist.

146. Flamingos are naturally white; their diet of brine shrimp and blue-green algae turns them pink.

147. The most common toilet paper color in France is pink.

148. Former U.S. Senate candidate Stan Jones spent years drinking silver to boost his immune system.

SAFE! The **Nerf Ball** is made of incredibly soft and spongy synthetic foam. Throw it around indoors: you can't damage lamps or break windows. You can't hurt babies or old people.

149. The first sales pitch for the Nerf ball was "Nerf: You can't hurt babies or old people!"

150. One side-effect: It turned his skin blue.

151. In Ancient Greek, the word *idiot* referred to anyone who was not interested in politics.

152. The FBI investigated the song "Louie Louie" because the agency thought the lyrics were dirty.

153. After three months, the FBI abandoned the investigation because it couldn't make out the words.

154. The BBC banned the Kinks' 1970 hit "Lola." Not because it was about a drag queen, but because it mentioned Coca-Cola.

155. Monty Python's *Life of Brian* was banned in Norway for blasphemy, prompting Sweden to advertise it as "the film that is so funny it was banned in Norway."

156. To keep the filming of *Star Wars VI: Return of the Jedi* on the down-low, producers said they were shooting a horror film called *Blue Harvest.*

157. When James Earl Jones—the voice of Darth Vader—was a child, he stuttered so badly that he refused to talk for almost eight years.

158. Vice President Joe Biden used to stutter too. One nun in junior high called him Master B-B-B-Biden.

159. Classmates in Latin class called him Joe Impedimenta.

160. Marilyn Monroe's trademark breathy voice arose from a technique for controlling her stutter.

(BLUE MAN) ALAMY

320. In 2011, the Bombay High Court ruled that astrology was a "trusted science," putting it on the same level as physics and chemistry.

161. Whenever Christopher Walken receives a new script, he immediately crosses out all the punctuation.

162. As a kid, Walken had a summer job assisting a lion tamer.

163. He likened it to working with a "sweet dog."

164. When a young Mike Tyson had trouble making friends, he started raising pigeons. Tyson once said the birds were "the first thing I ever loved in my life."

165. Tyson got into his first fistfight when a neighborhood bully killed one of his beloved flock.

166. Until 1968, the flag of Turks and Caicos pictured two igloos on a beach.

167. They were supposed to be piles of salt, but the artist accidentally gave them doors.

168. The Philippines flies its flag upside down in times of war.

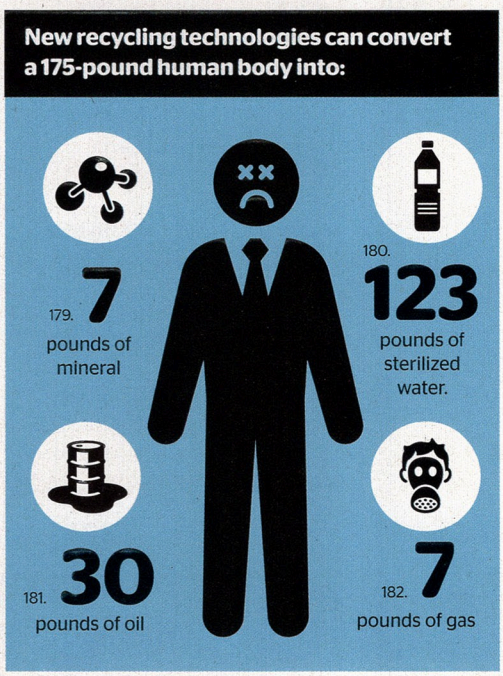
169. When U.S. forces learned that the Vietcong were superstitious about playing cards—believing the ace of spades foretold death—they dispersed thousands through the jungle.

170. South Korea's Camp Bonifas boasts the world's most dangerous golf course. Its single-hole course features a fairway riddled with land mines.

171. Japan and Russia still haven't signed a treaty to officially end World War II. (Get to it, guys!)

172. In 1967, the Nigerian Civil War ground to a halt for two days because both sides wanted to watch Pelé play in an exhibition soccer match.

173. When Germany wanted to incapacitate the French town of Neuve Chapelle during World War I, it deployed gas that caused violent sneezing fits.


New recycling technologies can convert a 175-pound human body into:
179. 7 pounds of mineral
180. 123 pounds of sterilized water.
181. 30 pounds of oil
182. 7 pounds of gas

174. Some cats are allergic to humans.

175. In the 1940s, the British government launched a series of PSAs on the proper way to use a handkerchief.

176. Kleenex was originally marketed not as a disposable hankie, but as a cold-cream remover.

177. The first modern mascara was a mixture of Vaseline and coal dust created by a chemist named T.L. Williams in 1913.

183. He named his company Maybelline after his sister Mabel.

184. Women with higher-pitched voices tend to be more fertile.

185. A single sperm cell contains 37.5 MB of DNA information.

186. That means an ejaculation yields about 15,875 GB of data—the equivalent of 62 MacBook Pros.

187. Human cells have 46 chromosomes—two fewer than a potato.

188. Scientists recently discovered that dolphins talk in their sleep ...

189. ... and when they do, they sound like whales!

190. Sea otters hold hands when they sleep so they don't drift apart.

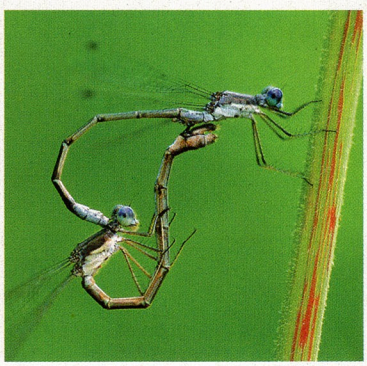
191. Male caimans dance to impress potential mates.

192. In 1973, Elmo Wright of the Kansas City Chiefs became the first NFL player to perform an end-zone dance.

193. Richard Silver invented the Electric Slide in 1976. It consisted of 22 steps.

194. When he learned that wedding revelers were bungling his masterpiece

178. When dragonflies mate, their tails form a heart.



199. The eighth power of any number is called zenzizenzizenzic.

by doing only 18 of the steps, he threatened amateur dancers with lawsuits.

195. (Silver never actually sued anyone.)

196. The twist was concocted as an anti-tango. Parents embraced it because it discouraged kids from touching.

197. Speaking of not touching, the Sargasso Sea, in the Atlantic Ocean, is the only sea without a coast.

198. India's Dahala Khagrabari is the world's only third-order enclave.

200. It's a patch of India inside a patch of Bangladesh, which is inside a patch of India—all of which is surrounded by Bangladesh.

201. The German town of Büsingen am Hochrhein is actually in Switzerland.

202. From 1832 to 1835, a 280-square-mile stretch in New Hampshire called Indian Stream was an independent nation.

203. No one has ever messed with Bhutan's independence. The country has never been conquered or governed by an outside power.

204. Bhutan's government uses Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a way to measure quality of life.

205. Its slogan? "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross Domestic Product."

206. Bhutan is also home to the world's grooviest stamps. In 1973, the nation issued stamps with grooves on the back, which could be played on a record player.

207. To date, none of these stamps has ever been sampled on a hip-hop album.

208. In 2013, the Belgian post office released a series of chocolate-flavored stamps.

209. German chocolate cake isn't German. It's named for Sam German, an American baker.

210. Honey never, ever goes bad.

211. Bees live longer when they consume resveratrol, a compound found in red wine.

212. If you serve them, make sure it's good wine. Bees remember faces.

213. Left-handed people see better underwater than righties.

214. Although southpaws make up only 10 percent of the population, 20 percent of all schizophrenics are left-handed.

215. The national animal of Scotland is the unicorn!

216. In Scotland, if you're talking nonsense, you're "havering."

217. A "sermuncle" is the technical term for a short sermon. If canal watching is one of your hobbies, you're a "gongoozler."

218. If you're hungry, your stomach is technically not growling. It's wambling.

(DRAGONFLY) ALAMY

219. Nobel Prize winner Niels Bohr was given a perpetual supply of beer piped into his house.

220. Gamblers are more likely to feel like they're winning if their slot machine makes noise after a win.

221. Slot machines in the U.K. display your odds of not winning.

222. Richard Nixon used poker winnings from his Navy days to fund his 1946 congressional campaign.

223. Franklin Roosevelt was the first president to ride in an armored limo.

224. It originally belonged to Chicago's favorite mobster, Al Capone.

235. In January 2012, residents of the town of Loreto in the Philippines saw fish rain from the sky. It's a phenomenon called *Iluvia de peces*.

236. In 1856, the entire city of Chicago was raised up with hydraulic jacks to build new sewers.

237. It was a success!

238. After all that hard work, the city burned down in 1871.

239. Extreme heat and wind conditions can spark fire tornadoes, or firenadoes.

240. Scientists recently discovered an enormous canyon underneath the 1.2 miles of ice covering Greenland.

241. Under a microscope a crack in steel looks like the Grand Canyon.

242. Studies show that people who use Facebook at work are 40 percent more productive.

243. According to Stephen Hawking, if the world population increases at its current exponential rate, by 2600 we'll be standing shoulder to shoulder.

244. And we would consume so much energy that Earth would glow red-hot.

245. "Hello" wasn't a common greeting until the invention of the telephone. Thomas Edison convinced the printers of the first phone books to make it the sanctioned greeting.

246. Alexander Graham Bell disagreed. He pushed for "Ahoy!"

247. After patenting the telephone, Bell and his company were sued more than 600 times.

248. They successfully defended themselves each time.

249. In 1997, Kleberg County, Texas, designated "Heaven-o" its official new phone greeting.

250. The Fonz's famous "Aaaay" catchphrase was Henry Winkler's way of coping with undiagnosed dyslexia.

251. The Fonz became so popular that ABC brass considered changing the show's name to *Fonzie's Happy Days*, until Winkler put a stop to it.

252. Between 1985 and 1987, the U.K. had its own version of *Saturday Night Live* called *Saturday Live*.

225. **5,032** number of tweets per minute mentioning *Sharknado* in July

226. **3,000,000** number of horses in Mongolia

\>

227. **2,750,000** number of people in Mongolia.

228. **40,000,000,000** number of Lego bricks it would take to reach the moon

229. **3.5** tons of jellybeans Jelly Belly donated for Ronald Reagan's 1981 election

230. **113** decibel level of the world's loudest clap

231. **12,000,000** dollars mogul Leona Helmsley left in her will for her dog, Trouble

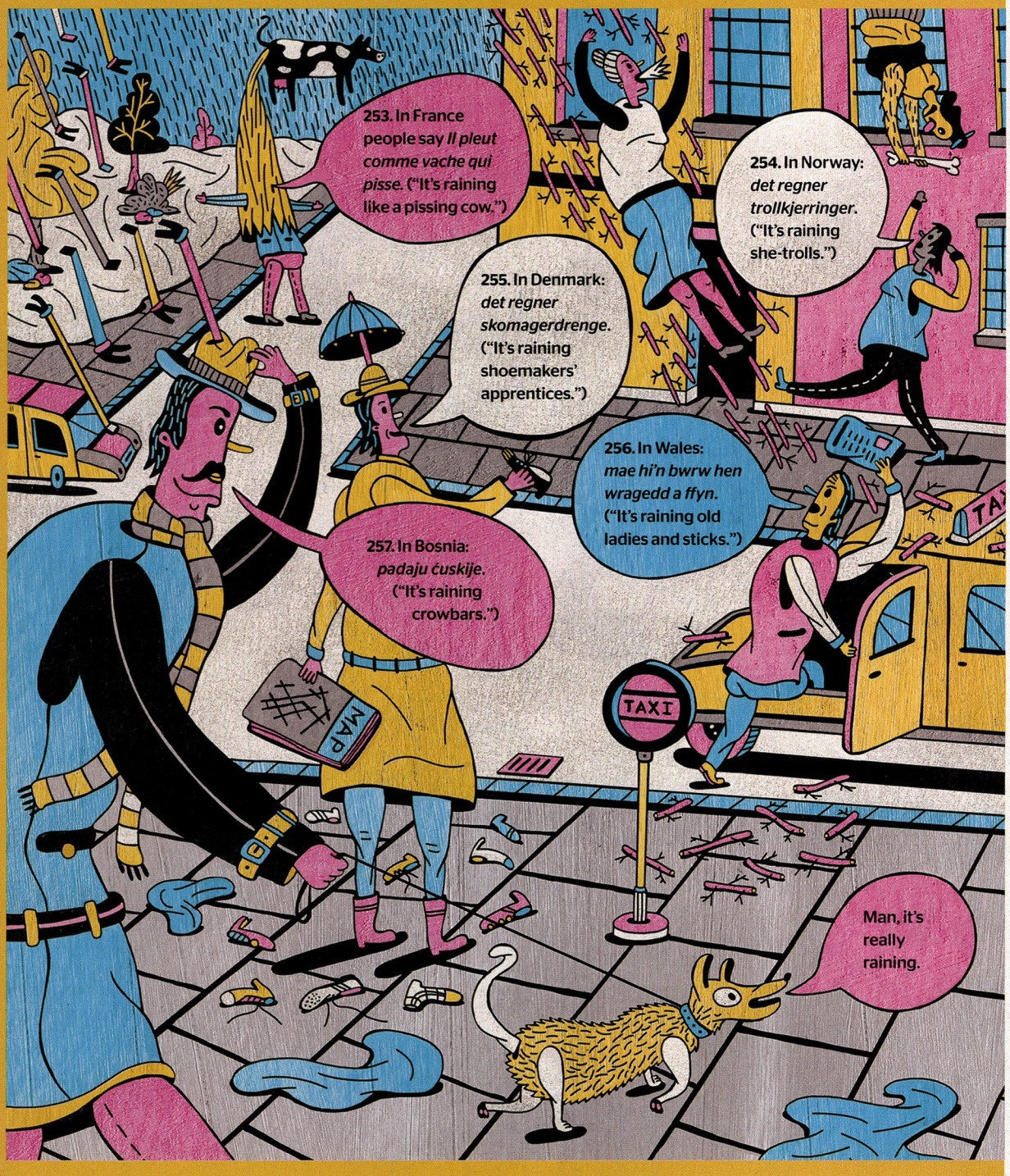
232. **47** seconds it takes to travel on the world's shortest scheduled flight (which covers just over a mile on Scotland's Orkney Islands)

233. **.02** how fast ketchup moves out of the bottle in mph

234. **.07** percent of people who are drunk right now

321. In preparation for the Super Bowl, Americans buy an estimated 325.5 million gallons of beer.

IN THE U.S. IT RAINS CATS AND DOGS. ELSEWHERE, ALL BETS ARE OFF.


253. In France people say *Il pleut comme vache qui pisse.* ("It's raining like a pissing cow.")
254. In Norway: *det regner trollkjerringer.* ("It's raining she-trolls.")
255. In Denmark: *det regner skomagerdrenge.* ("It's raining shoemakers' apprentices.")
256. In Wales: *mae hi'n bwrw hen wragedd a ffyn.* ("It's raining old ladies and sticks.")
257. In Bosnia: *padaju ćuskije.* ("It's raining crowbars.")
MAP
TAXI
Man, it's really raining.

322. The German submarine *U-1206* was torpedoed and sunk in April 1945, after a malfunctioning toilet forced it to the surface.

258. The inspiration for Marge Simpson's towering blue hair? The beehive 'do sported by creator Matt Groening's mother.

259. All the characters on *The Simpsons* have four-fingered hands with one exception: God.

260. "God Bless America" was originally written for a musical comedy revue called *Yip Yap Yaphank*, but it didn't fit the show's tone.

261. *Grand Theft Auto* was initially called *Race 'n' Chase*. Players could choose to be a cop instead of a thug.

262. Car batteries are the world's most recycled product.

264. About 75 percent of your car can be recycled.

265. British police cars often carry a stockpile of teddy bears to console children after car crashes.

266. Thirty-five percent of British adults reportedly cuddle with a stuffed bear each night.

267. President William Howard Taft tried to replace Roosevelt's teddy bear with a plush toy opossum.

268. One slogan read: "No more teddy bear, we will fondle with glee. Billy Possum is future, our mascot shall be."

269. It didn't take off.

263. Before flowers came into fashion, brides carried garlic and dill down the aisle.

270. Teddy Roosevelt was famously given his own floor at a Washington hospital—not because he was the president, but because he was snoring so loudly.

271. When Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro needs some shut-eye, he sleeps in Hugo Chavez's mausoleum.

272. A baby can cost parents 750 hours of sleep in its first year.

273. Randy Gardner owns the sleeplessness Guinness world record for going 11 straight days without a doze.

274. On day four, Gardner hallucinated that he was San Diego Chargers running back Paul Lowe.

275. Yawning is so contagious that it can spread to dogs and monkeys.

276. Laughter's also contagious. You're more likely to laugh at a show if it has a laugh track.

277. And it's good for you. Studies show that laughter increases levels of salivary immunoglobulin A, an antibody that fights respiratory infections.

323. Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer was almost called Reginald, but the name sounded too British.

278. On the other hand, it can be dangerous. In 1975, 50-year-old Alex Mitchell of England laughed so hard at an episode of *The Goodies* that he died.

279. Eugene Aserinsky, the sleep studies pioneer who discovered REM, died after he fell asleep at the wheel.

280. Beds at IKEA get their names from Norwegian place names.

281. Rugs are named for Danish places.

282. Meanwhile, bathroom supplies are named for Scandinavian lakes and bays.

283. A mother-in-law bed is like a Murphy bed, but instead of unfolding from a wall, it's lowered from the ceiling.

284. The best man's original purpose was to serve as an accomplice in case the bride needed to be kidnapped from disapproving parents.

285. Meanwhile, the bridesmaid tradition started because people believed that dressing everyone up in the same clothing would confuse evil spirits.

286. Ever practical, Puritan brides-to-be accepted engagement thimbles from their fiancés.

287. When the wedding day arrived, they'd simply cut the bottom off and wear it as a ring.

288. In 2006, a Sudanese man made international news when he was forced to marry a goat.

289. Her name was Rose.

290. Nervous about being jilted at the altar? Marriage by proxy, where someone can stand in for your bride or groom in case they don't show, is legal in ...

291. ... California

292. ... Colorado

293. ... Texas

294. ... and Montana!

295. In 1726, an Englishwoman named Mary Toft convinced a number of prominent British doctors that she was giving birth to rabbits.

296. Jackie Chan claims he was in his mother's womb for 12 months.

297. Pregnancy can heighten a woman's sense of smell.

298. It can also increase her shoe size.

299. Research suggests that a man's hormonal levels change during his spouse's pregnancy ...

300. ... which can cause morning sickness and sympathy labor pains.

301. Male nipples are vestigial.

302. In other words, pointless.

303. Scar removal was one of the most popular plastic surgeries performed in ancient Rome.

304. Particularly for scars on the back.

305. These indicated someone had turned his back in battle.

306. Today, one of the most popular surgeries in South Korea is the "smile lipt," which curves the edges of a person's lips into a permanent smile.

307. Scientists recently created the first human digital brain-to-brain interface, which allowed two researchers to control each other's movements—with their minds.

309. In 1998, the U.S. Army tried developing a telepathic ray gun "where words could be transmitted to be heard like the spoken word, except that it could only be heard within a person's head."

310. In the 1960s, the CIA launched Project Acoustic Kitty, a furtive attempt to equip cats with recording equipment to spy on Soviet embassies.

311. After the agency spent some $20 million on the project, the prototype feline was hit by a taxicab.

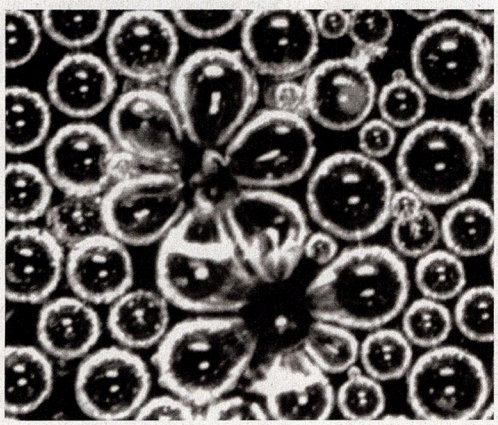
312. A three-mile pipeline delivers beer to all the bars in Germany's Veltins-Arena, a soccer stadium.

313. At the first Thanksgiving there was tons of beer, brandy, gin, and wine.

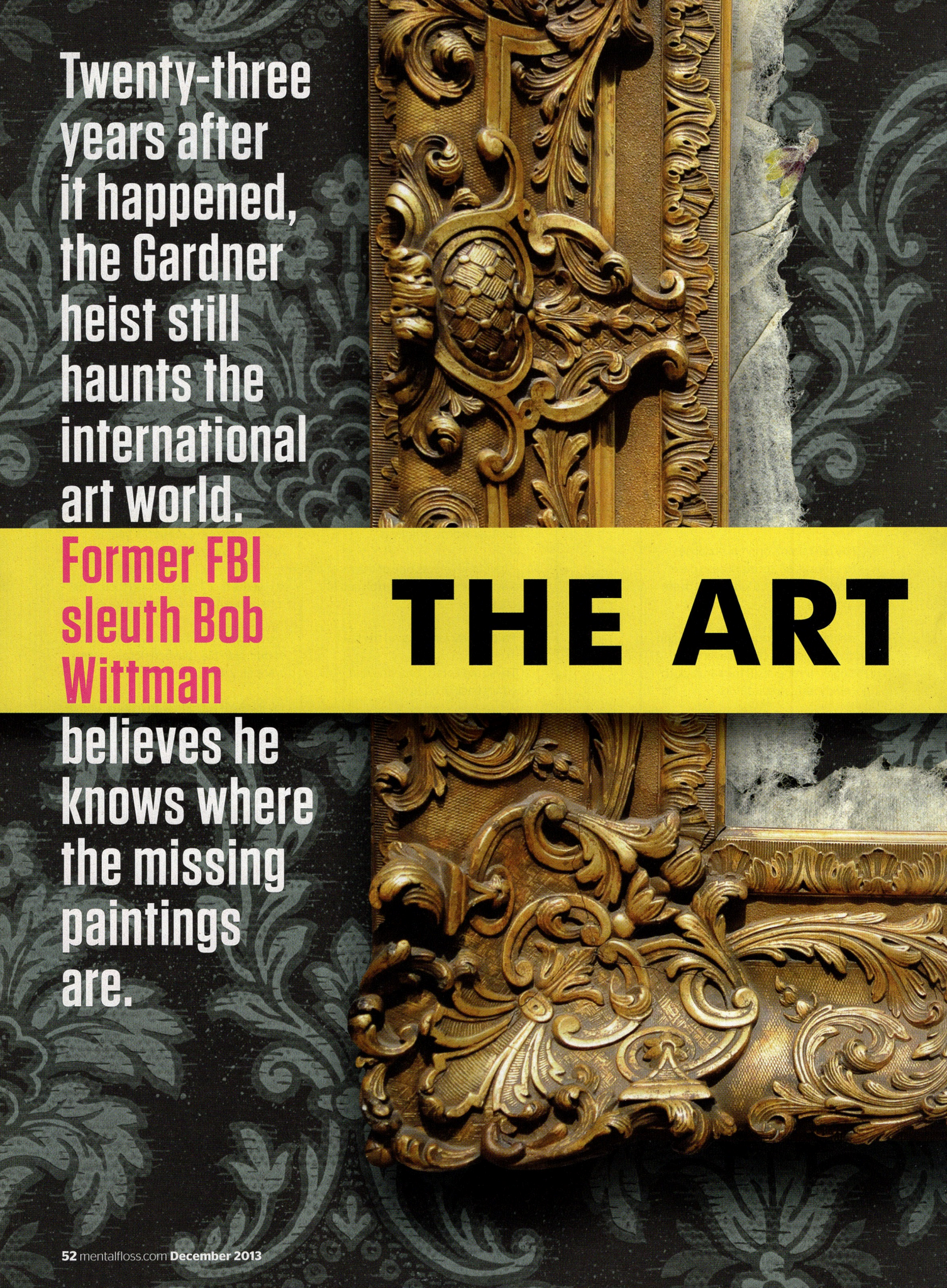
314. (Probably to make up for the lack of pumpkin pie, mashed potatoes, and cranberry sauce.)

315. If you're walking with a drink, you're most likely to spill it between your seventh and 10th steps.

316. Research shows that a bacon sandwich effectively cures a hangover.



308. Magnified, bursting champagne bubbles look like flowers.



Twenty-three years after it happened, the Gardner heist still haunts the international art world. Former FBI sleuth Bob Wittman believes he knows where the missing paintings are.

THE ART

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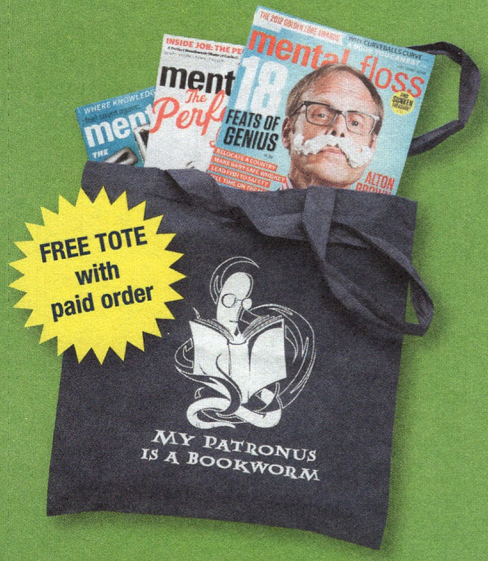

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DETECTIVE

BY TIM MURPHY

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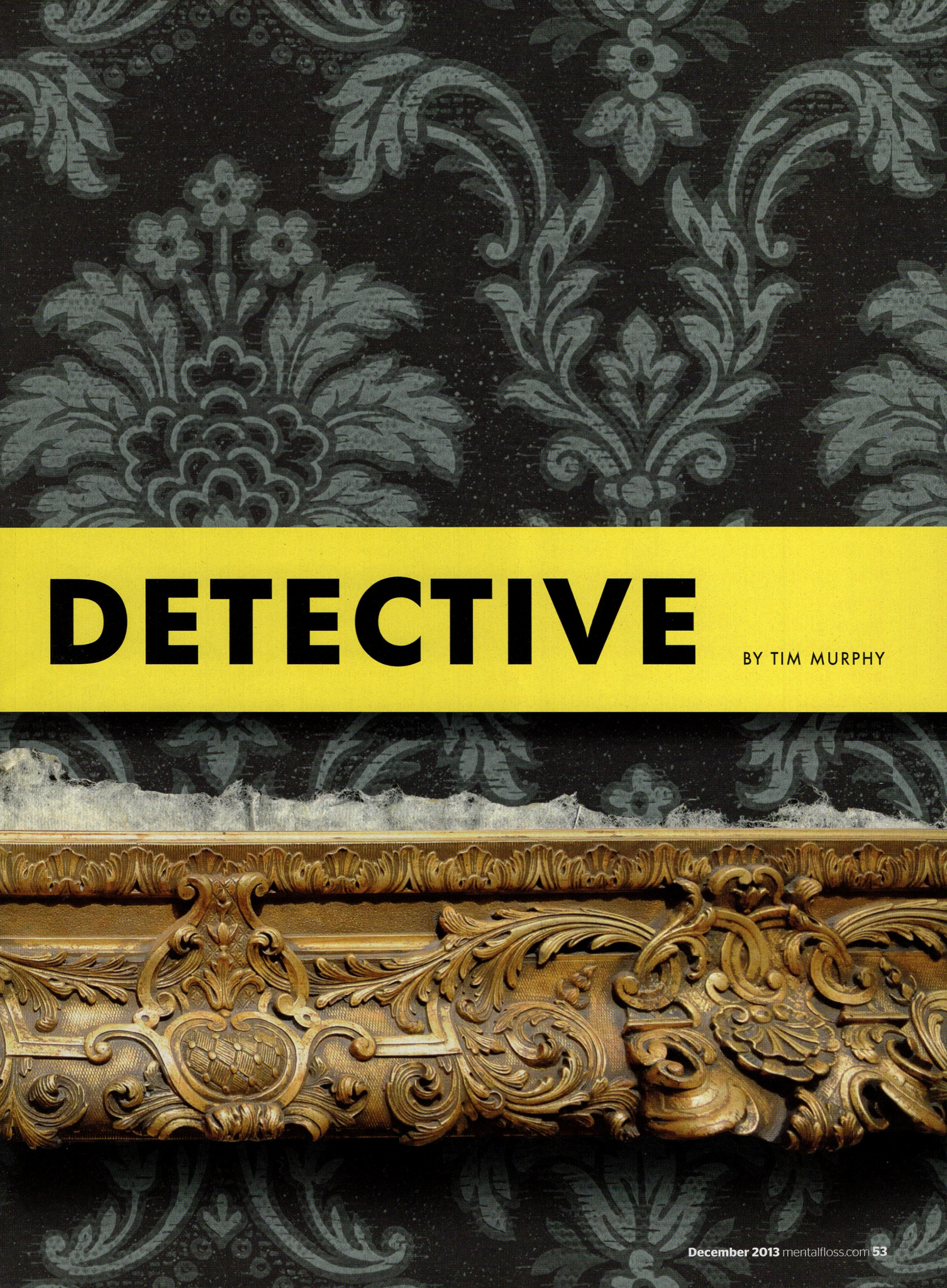
Former FBI sleuth Bob Wittman believes he knows where the missing paintings are.

THE ART



DETECTIVE

BY TIM MURPHY

At 1:24 a.m. on March 18, 1990,

two policemen demanded to be buzzed in by the guard at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. At least, they looked like policemen. Once inside the Venetian-palazzo-style building, the men ordered the guard to step away from the emergency buzzer, his only link to the outside world. They handcuffed him and another guard and tied them up in the basement. For the next 81 minutes, the thieves raided the museum's treasure-filled galleries. Then they loaded up a vehicle waiting outside and disappeared.

Later that morning, the day guard arrived for his shift and discovered spaces on the walls where paintings should have been. Rembrandt's "Storm on the Sea of Galilee," Vermeer's "The Concert," Manet's "Chez Tortoni," and five works by Edgar Degas were missing. In some places, empty frames were still hanging, the priceless works crudely sliced out.

It was an appalling attack on a beloved museum, the personal collection of an eccentric heiress who handpicked the works on travels through Europe in the 1890s. The crime sparked a sweeping multinational investigation by the museum, the FBI, and numerous private parties. To date, the Gardner heist is the largest property theft in U.S. history—experts have assessed the current value of the stolen art at more than $600 million. Twenty-three years later, the case remains unsolved.

In fact, not a single painting has been recovered. But this past March, the FBI signaled that it was close to solving the mystery. Officials announced that investigations had uncovered new information about the thieves and the East Coast organized crime syndicates to which they belonged. The art world buzzed over the news, yet one man doubted what he heard.

Bob Wittman belongs to an elite society—the handful of government and private-sector professionals who track down art criminals and recover stolen work all over the world. Art theft is a $6 to $8 billion annual industry, and it's the fourth-largest crime worldwide, according to the FBI. As an agent on the FBI's Art Crime Team, Wittman spent two years working undercover on the Gardner case before he retired. He believes he knows where the art is.

And right now, he says, the FBI is "barking up the wrong tree."

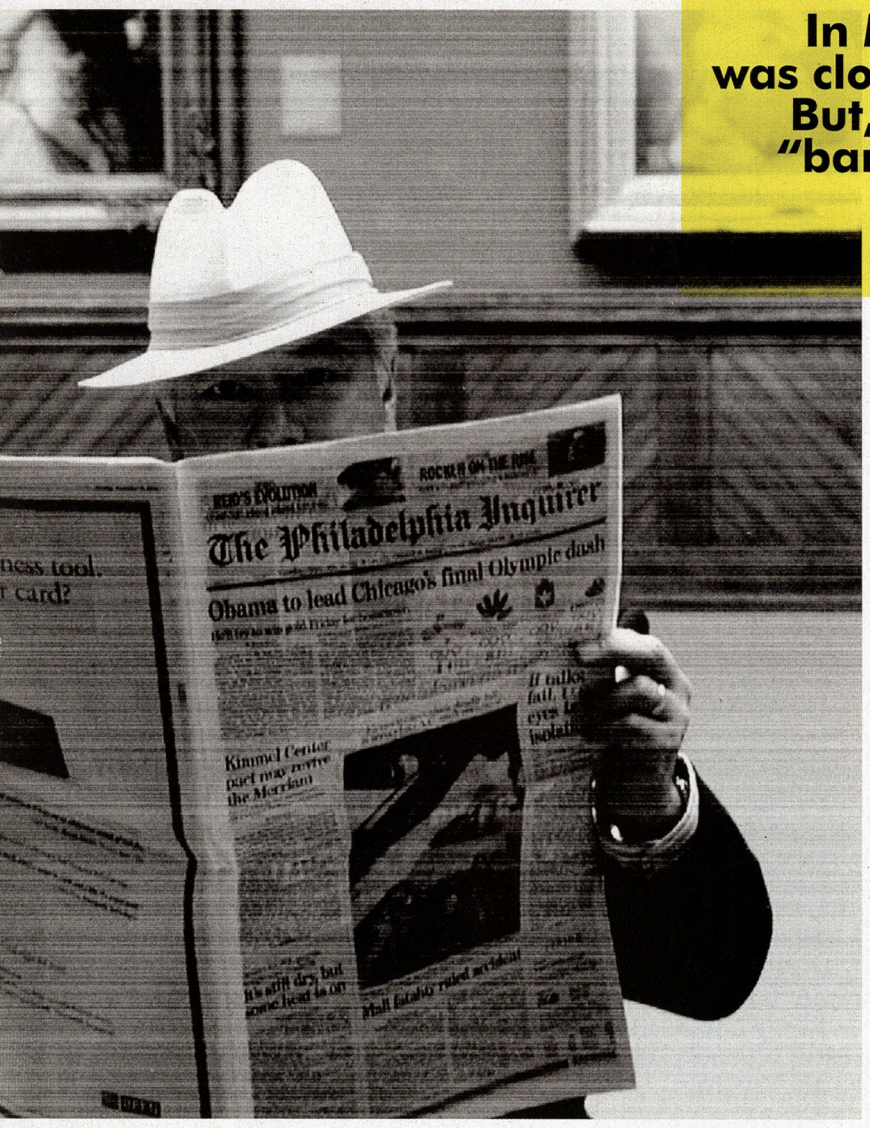
WITTMAN, 58, GREW UP IN BALTIMORE, the son of an American father and a Japanese mother who worked as antique dealers specializing in Japanese pieces. "When I was 15, I knew the difference between Imari and Kutani ceramics," Wittman says. He applied for work with the FBI because he admired the agency's investigations into civil rights abuses. In 1988, he started on the property-crime beat, before moving into art theft. The agency's Art Crime Team was created in 2004; Wittman was a founding member.

Originally established to recover cultural treasures looted from Iraq after the U.S. invasion, the Art Crime Team now includes 14 agents assigned to different regions of the country. Some members possess knowledge of the field when they join. Others begin as art illiterates. Regardless, all recruits receive extensive training from curators, dealers, and collectors to beef up their understanding of the art business.

Even Wittman, with his background in antiquities, underwent art schooling. After he recovered his first pieces of stolen art in the late '80s and early '90s—a Rodin sculpture and a 50-pound crystal ball from Beijing's Forbidden City—the FBI sent him to the Barnes Foundation, a Philadelphia art institution. "When you can discuss what makes a Cézanne a Cézanne, you can move in the art underworld," he says. Educating the agents has paid off. In its decade of operation, the FBI's Art Crime Team has recovered 2,650 items valued at more than $150 million. Of course, not every piece the team chases down is glamorous. Nearly 25 percent of the Art Crime Team's job is hunting down nonunique items, such as prints and collectibles. "These works can be concealed and eventually nudged back into the open market easily," Wittman says. The finds are less sexy but represent a sizable black market.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: ALAMY (FRAME)

In March, the FBI signaled it was close to solving the mystery. But, Wittman says, the FBI is "barking up the wrong tree."



"My life was always a hunt," Wittman says. Over a 20-year period, he's recovered more than $300 million in stolen art.

Then there are the masterpieces. The most famous examples are Da Vinci's "Mona Lisa," which was recovered 28 months after the painting was stolen from the Louvre in 1911, and Edvard Munch's "The Scream." Munch created four versions of the painting, two of which have been stolen and recovered in the past 20 years alone. But the problem for crooks is that it's nearly impossible to sell such an iconic work on the open market, except to a rich art lover who wants to savor it in a locked basement. So why steal the pieces if they're so hard to unload?

According to Geoffrey Kelly, a Boston-based member of the FBI's Art Crime Team, "art thieves are like any other thieves." They use these famous works as collateral in drug or money-laundering deals. More importantly, the pieces can be used as bargaining chips for plea deals in case the crooks are busted down the line. "It might be difficult to fill suitcases with $100 million in cash," Kelly says. "But you can hold a $50 million piece of art in your hand. It's valuable and portable."

There's another reason thieves favor this line of work: Art crime isn't high on a prosecutor's to-do list. "The rewards are good, and the penalties are small versus dealing drugs or money laundering," says Turbo Paul Hendry, a reformed British art thief, who now serves as an intermediary between law enforcement and the underworld. "Stealing a million pounds' [$1.62 million] worth of art will get you only two years max jail time, not including plea bargaining and cooperating," Hendry says. The harder part is actually nabbing a thief. And according to Wittman, there are only two ways to catch one.

NONE OF THE FBI'S cloak-and-dagger tricks would work without "the bump" or "the vouch." As Wittman explains, a vouch involves employing an informant or a cooperating criminal to introduce you to an art trafficker, finessing you into his inner circle. A bump, which is rarer but more cinematic, refers to the spycraft of appearing to bump into a trafficker randomly and then engaging him in conversation.

Insinuating yourself into the underworld and cultivating such ties involves careful preparation and plenty of travel. Wittman, who retired from the FBI in 2008 and now heads a private-sector art investigation and security firm, estimates that he spent a third of last year in hotel rooms. That may sound excessive, but the travel is key. Over a 20-year period, Wittman says, he recovered more than $300 million worth of stolen art and cultural relics, including Native American artifacts and the diary of a key Nazi operative.

"My life was always a hunt," he says. "We'd be totally immersed in one case, then right on to the next one—whatever trail was hot was the one we'd pick up on. I'd have four different cell phones to play four different roles."

Wittman's sweetest triumph came in 2005. He posed as an art authenticator for the Russian mob in order to retrieve a $35 million Rembrandt stolen from the national museum in Sweden. In Wittman's 2010 memoir, *Priceless: How I Went Undercover to Rescue the World's Stolen Treasures,* he recounts the arrest in the case, which unfolded in a tiny hotel room in Copenhagen. "We started to race for the door and heard the key card click again," Wittman writes. "This time, it banged open violently. Six large Danes with bulletproof vests dashed past me, gang tackling Kadhum and Kostov onto the bed. I raced out, the

Rembrandt pressed to my chest." Wittman savors that victory, and he expected an equally thrilling conclusion to the Gardner case, especially once a crook offered to sell him the paintings.

FOR ALL ITS SOPHISTICATION, the Gardner theft has baffled investigators because the heist was so crudely carried out. The thieves left behind some of the museum's most valuable works, including Titian's "The Rape of Europa." The slicing of two Rembrandts from their frames suggests they were unaware that damaging a work of art sinks its value. "They knew how to steal, but they were art stupid," Wittman says. "They probably thought they could sell them off for five to 10 percent of their value. But no real art buyer is going to pay $350,000 for hot art that they can't ever sell."

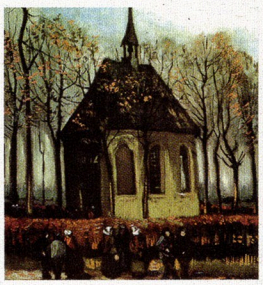
The other element that makes the Gardner case unusual is its longevity. "What's really suspicious," Wittman says, "is that even though a generation has passed, not one single object has resurfaced on the market." For those who believe that some or all of the works have been destroyed, Kelly, of the Art Crime Team, begs to differ. "That rarely happens," he says. "Because the one trump card a criminal holds when he's arrested is that he has access to stolen art."

In spring 2006, Wittman followed a lead that brought him closer to the art than any investigator has come to date. While in Paris for a conference about undercover law enforcement, he received a tip from a French policeman. Through wiretaps, French authorities had been monitoring a pair of suspects. Wittman calls the men "Laurenz" and "Sunny." French police claimed that the men had ties to the mob in Corsica, a French island in the Mediterranean known for its affiliation with organized crime. Now they were living in Miami. The police suspected the two were linked to the Gardner theft because, as a sign of Corsican pride, the thieves had stolen the finial off a Napoleonic flag hanging in the museum. (Napoleon was Corsican.)

In spring 2006, Wittman followed a lead that he thinks brought him as close to the art as any investigator has come to date.

IN THE LOST AND FOUND

As soon as humans moved past painting on cave walls, bandits started making off with the art.



LOST

"CONGREGATION LEAVING THE REFORMED CHURCH IN NUENE"

$116,650 REWARD

The thieves were caught in 2004, but an outdated Dutch legal loophole may make them the owners of the still-missing painting, which Van Gogh made for his mother in 1884.

Using the vouch method, a French cop working undercover told Laurenz, who had been an underworld money launderer back in France, that Wittman was a gray-market art broker. Wittman flew to Miami, using the alias Bob Clay.

Wittman and Laurenz picked up Sunny at Miami International Airport in Laurenz's Rolls-Royce. In his book, Wittman describes Sunny as "a short, plump man of 50, his brown mullet matted. ... As soon as we [left the airport and] hit the fresh Florida air, Sunny lit a Marlboro." An FBI surveillance team followed in slow pursuit.

The three men went to dinner at La Goulue, an upscale bistro north of Miami Beach. They ordered seafood. During the meal, Laurenz vouched for Wittman, telling Sunny that he and Wittman had met years ago at an art gallery in South Beach. The next morning, the men met again, this time for bagels. Sunny asked Laurenz and Wittman to remove the batteries from their phones, ensuring that their conversation would be private. Sunny then looked at Wittman and said, "I can get you three or four paintings. A Rembrandt, a Vermeer, and a Monet." The paintings, Sunny explained, had been stolen several years earlier.

"From where?" Wittman asked.

"A museum in the U.S., I think," said Sunny. "We have them, and so for 10 million they are yours."

"Yeah, of course," Wittman replied before qualifying the statement: "If your paintings are real, if you've got a Vermeer and a Rembrandt." The pieces all seemed to fit.

Over the next year, the three men met several times in Miami. Wittman didn't think Laurenz and Sunny had robbed the Gardner; they were

FOUND

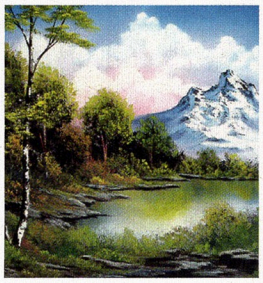
"COUNT LEPIC AND HIS DAUGHTERS"
WORTH $11 MILLION
In 2008, three thieves in ski masks walked into Zurich's E.G. Bührle Collection and swiped this Degas at gunpoint. A year later, an anonymous tipster was rewarded $524,000 for its return.

LOST

"LE PIGEON AUX PETITS POIS (THE PIGEON AND GREEN PEAS)"
WORTH $28 MILLION
This Picasso was burgled from a Paris museum in 2010. The crook, who was soon caught, claimed to have thrown it into the rubbish. Skeptical authorities remain on the hunt.

FOUND

"PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN"
WORTH $100 MILLION
Nazis added this 16th-century Raphael to their stockpile of plunder after invading Krakow, Poland. In 2012, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed it found it in an undisclosed bank vault.



LOST

"HAPPY LITTLE CLOUD #1,744"*
PRICELESS!
While Bob Ross was filming season two of *The Joy of Painting*, a burglar broke into his van and took 13 of his reference paintings. We think this may be one of them, but we can't be sure.

*Ross didn't name this painting, so we took the liberty.

more likely freelance fences. He couldn't discern what their allegiance might be, but he knew that this was the trail that would lead to the missing art.

"I was playing Laurenz, and Laurenz thought that he and I were playing Sunny," Wittman writes in his book. "I'm sure Laurenz had his own angles thought out. And Sunny? Who knew what really went through his mind?"

The ruse went on. Working with U.S. cops, Wittman concocted an elaborate fake art deal, taking the Frenchmen to a yacht moored in Miami. The vessel was stocked with bikini-clad undercover cops, who were dancing and eating strawberries. Onboard, Wittman, as Bob Clay, sold fake paintings to fake Colombian drug dealers for $1.2 million.

Wittman continued to negotiate with Sunny for the Rembrandt and the Vermeer until an unrelated bust threatened to derail his work. French police nabbed the art-theft ring to which Laurenz and Sunny belonged. The group had stolen two Picassos worth $66 million from the artist's granddaughter, and shortly after the arrests, goons from the organization showed up in Miami. They wanted to talk to Wittman.

Before the meeting, which would take place in a Miami hotel bar, Wittman stashed two guns in his pockets. Laurenz or Sunny had nicknamed one thug—a white man with long stringy dark hair and a crooked nose—"Vanilla." "Chocolate" was black and bald and wore braces. He was built like a linebacker and was known to be good with a knife. Over drinks, the thugs accused Wittman of being a cop. He countered by saying the FBI was on his back, threatening his art-broker reputation. He finessed his way through the conversation and survived the encounter, his cover intact. But it wouldn't be for long.

A year later, after busting a second art-theft ring on another job, this one in a museum in Nice, French authorities inadvertently revealed Wittman's cover. All his hard work was blown. In *Priceless*, he writes: "Bureaucracies and turf fighting on both sides of the Atlantic had destroyed the best chance in a decade to rescue the Gardner paintings."

TODAY, despite the FBI's public statement, the fate of the works seems as mysterious as ever. Wittman believes the paintings are in Europe. "They've been dispersed," he says. He doubts the FBI actually knows who the original thieves are. "That's bogus," he says. "It's a smokescreen to crowdsource leads."

The FBI takes issue with Wittman's comments. "When we said in March that we had the identities of the Gardner thieves, that was definitely not a bluff," says Boston-based FBI special agent Greg Comcowich, who stresses that Wittman is no longer with the agency. "Speculating at this point is not acceptable," he says. Comcowich says another agent tracked down the French agent who worked closely on the Gardner case with Wittman. "He told me Wittman was telling a fairy tale," Comcowich says.

Wittman maintains that he had an opportunity to crack the case and admits that it has passed. Reminiscing about the experience, Wittman writes, "[It] was all part of an expanding wilderness of mirrors." And in that carnival of intrigue, where the promise of treasure offered little more than errant leads and misdirection, Wittman still marvels that he and the FBI ever came so close to returning the art to its rightful home. ⊛

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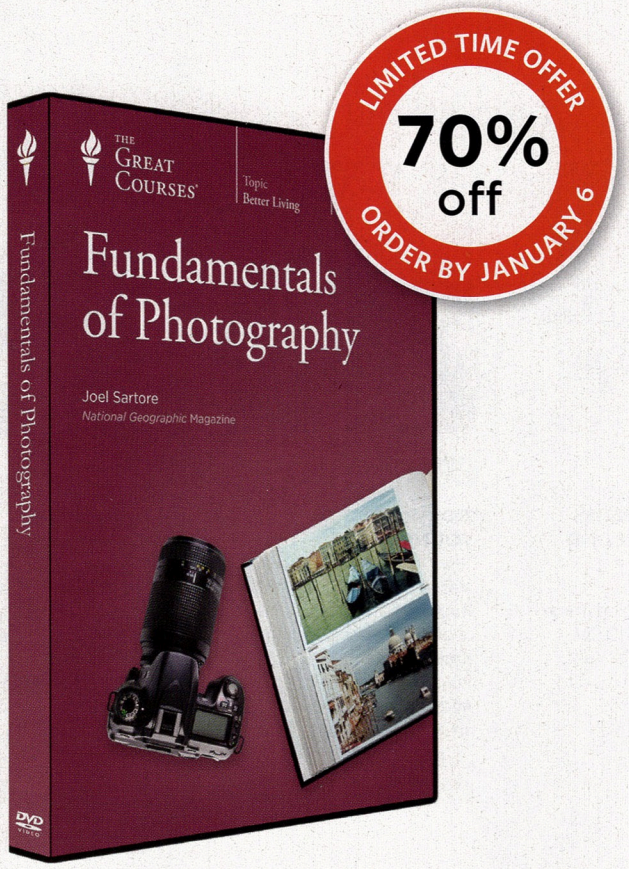

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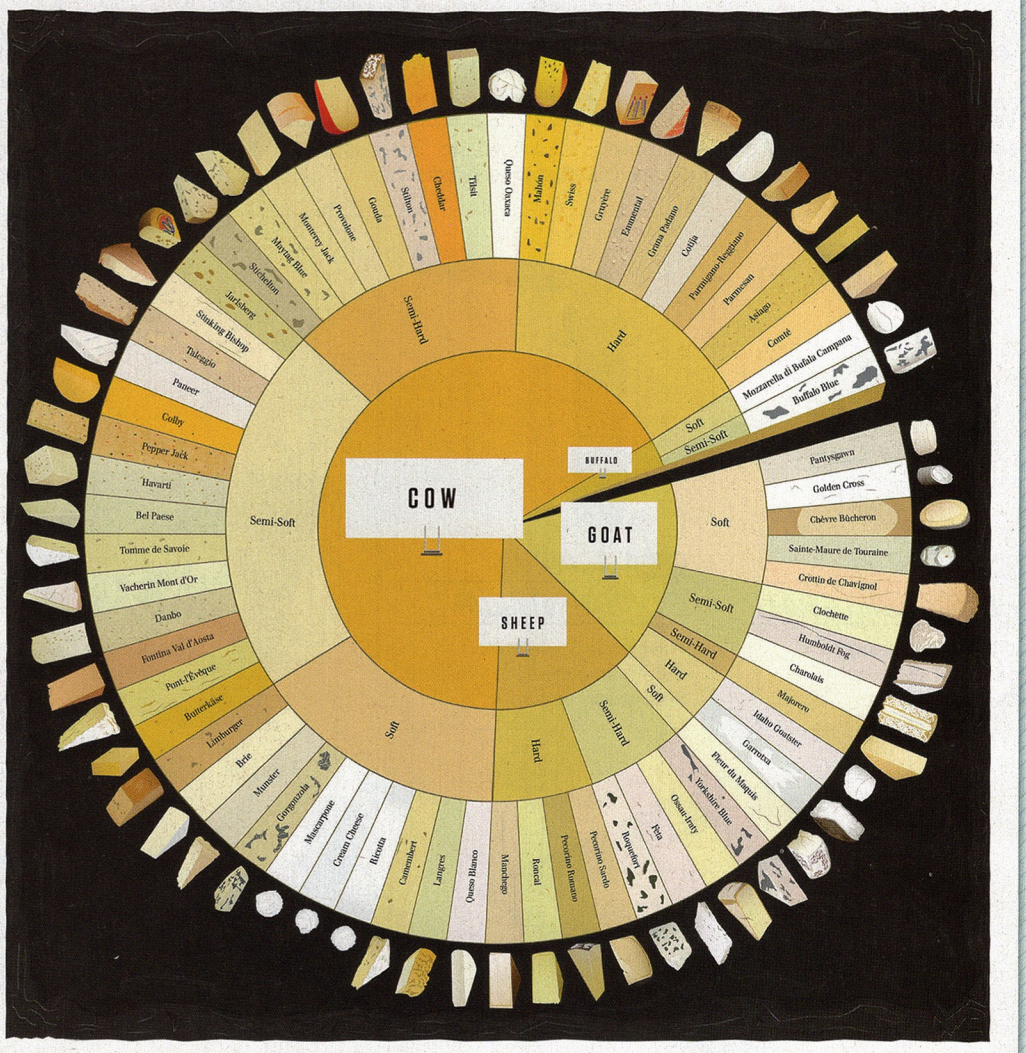

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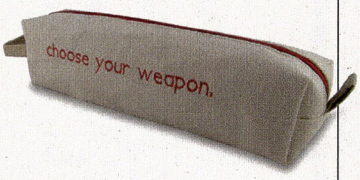

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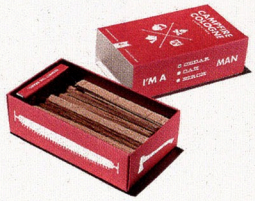

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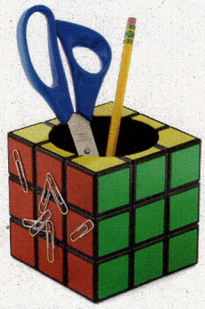

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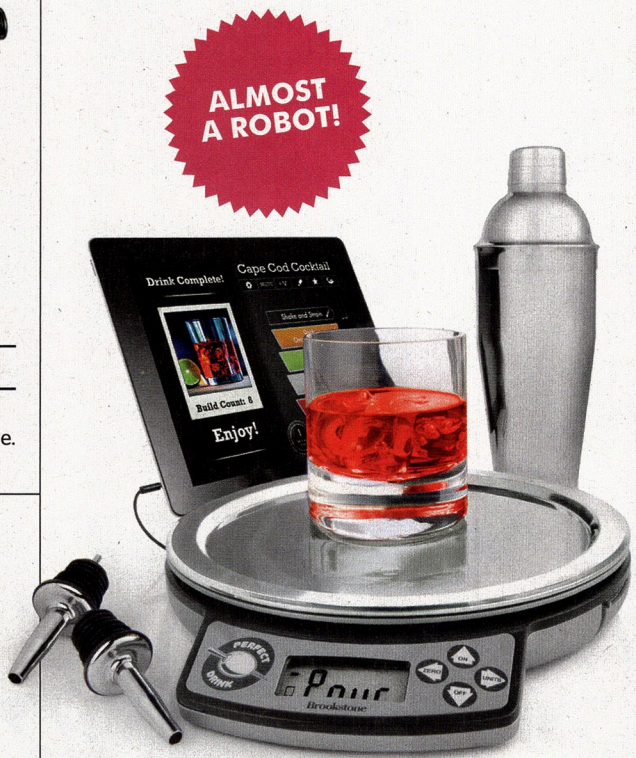

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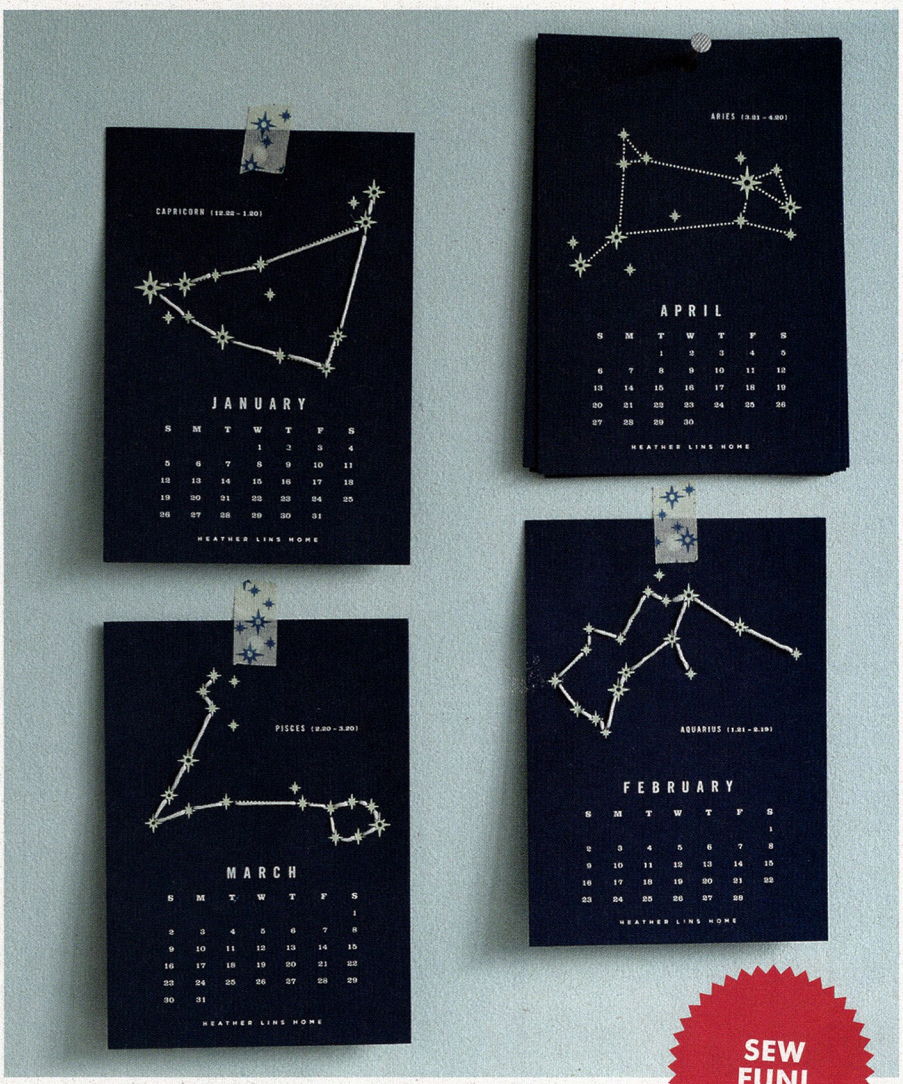

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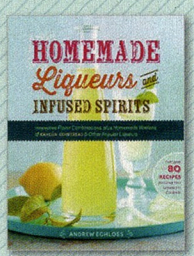

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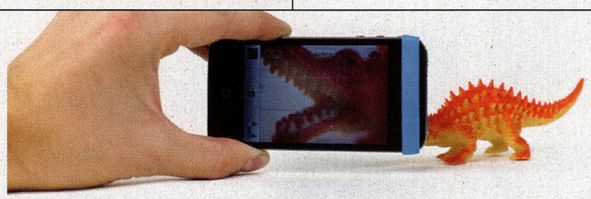

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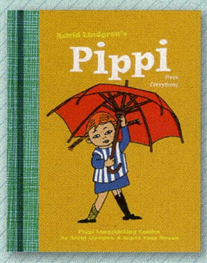

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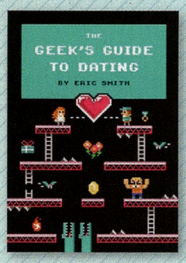

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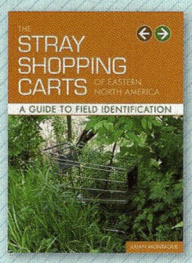
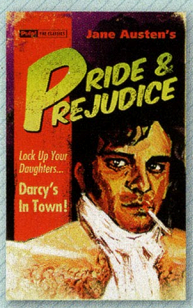
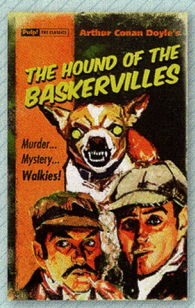
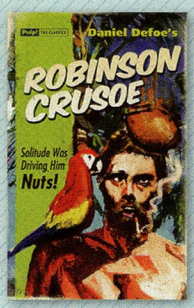


Julian Monague's field guide is a must for naturalists devoted to spotting carts in the wild. **$16,** *amazon.com*







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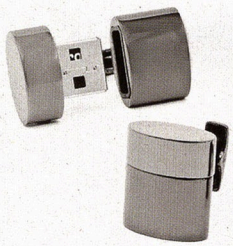

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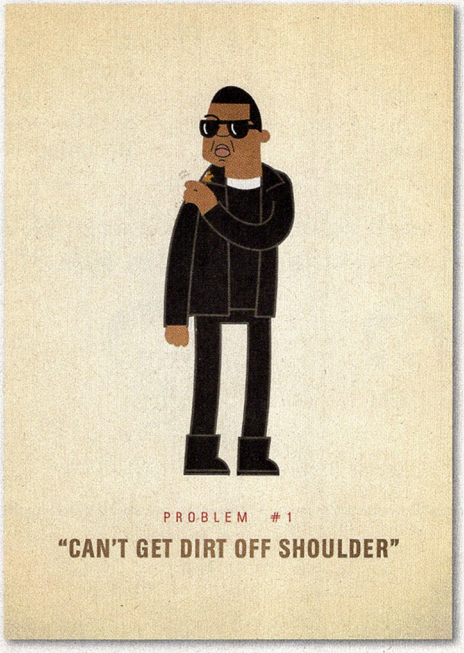

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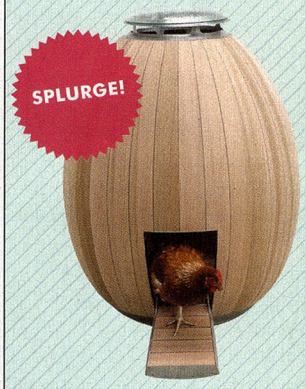

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BY LUCAS ADAMS

NAME: _____ AGE: _____

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1 What is the Oval Office's Resolute Desk made from?

- ☐A☐ George Washington's cherry trees
- ☐B☐ Lumber donated by Johnny Appleseed
- ☐C☐ A British expedition ship
- ☐D☐ Wood from Civil War barracks

2 What was the title of the official WWF cookbook?

- ☐A☐ *Can You Take the Heat? The WWF Is Cooking!*
- ☐B☐ *Hulk Hogan's Pasta Mania*
- ☐C☐ *Hot Meat With Stone Cold Steve Austin*
- ☐D☐ *Do You Smell What the Rock Is Cooking?*

3 What happened to Oliver Cromwell's corpse?

- ☐A☐ It was fed to sharks.
- ☐B☐ It was dug up and beheaded, then the head was put on a spike.
- ☐C☐ It was embalmed and buried under Parliament.
- ☐D☐ It was stuffed and preserved in a museum.

4 In diner lingo, what are "zeppelins in a fog"?

- ☐A☐ Bratwurst and gravy
- ☐B☐ Bananas in chocolate syrup
- ☐C☐ A hoagie and clam chowder
- ☐D☐ Sausages and mashed potatoes

5 Which celebrity did George H.W. Bush briefly consider for his vice-presidential slot in 1988?

- ☐A☐ Tom Selleck
- ☐B☐ Frank Sinatra
- ☐C☐ Barbara Walters
- ☐D☐ Clint Eastwood

6 Why was the title of the James Bond film *Tomorrow Never Lies* changed to *Tomorrow Never Dies*?

- ☐A☐ Roger Ebert suggested it.
- ☐B☐ It was accidental, based on a secretary's typo.
- ☐C☐ It tested better with Russian audiences.
- ☐D☐ Pierce Brosnan thought the original title made no sense.

7 Louis XVI tried to flee France during the French Revolution but was arrested by Jean-Baptiste Drouet. What supposedly gave Louis away?

- ☐A☐ He constantly spoke in the third person.
- ☐B☐ Drouet recognized his picture on a coin.
- ☐C☐ He berated Drouet for not bowing in his presence.
- ☐D☐ Drouet was his second cousin.

8 Which stunt was seriously considered by Michael Jackson's PR team for his 2005 comeback?

- ☐A☐ Building a giant robot that looked like Jackson to roam the Las Vegas desert
- ☐B☐ Opening a chain of "Thriller" restaurants
- ☐C☐ Placing "Man in the Mirror" stickers of Jackson's face on mirrors in IKEA stores
- ☐D☐ Reuniting the Jackson 5

9 What's notable about the *Nepenthes attenboroughii*, a plant named for naturalist Sir David Attenborough?

- ☐A☐ It's the world's second-largest carnivorous plant.
- ☐B☐ It grows only in Attenborough's hometown.
- ☐C☐ Attenborough genetically engineered it.
- ☐D☐ Attenborough is allergic to it.

10 Which of these was a dance based on a 1960s TV character?

- ☐A☐ The Colonel Klink
- ☐B☐ The Jeannie Wiggle
- ☐C☐ The Eddie Munster Twist
- ☐D☐ The Lurch

11 Which of these is not a hiking destination in California?

- ☐A☐ Louse Canyon
- ☐B☐ Bumpass Hell
- ☐C☐ Devils Postpile
- ☐D☐ Murder Falls

12 What sparked the Pork and Beans War?

- ☐A☐ A U.S.-British border dispute over Maine
- ☐B☐ A farmer's riot over grain prices
- ☐C☐ Shady judging at a 1930s hobo cook-off
- ☐D☐ An incident in which students refused to eat lunch

ANSWERS

1. c (Queen Victoria presented the desk to Rutherford B. Hayes in 1880.)
2. a (Don't try making Mick Foley's knuckle sandwiches without a recipe!)
3. b
4. d
5. d (Eastwood was mayor of tiny Carmel, Calif., at the time.)
6. b
7. b
8. a
9. a (This pitcher plant is large enough to hold a liter of water.)
10. d (Lurch was the butler on *The Addams Family*.)
11. d (Louse Canyon is perfect for a romantic day-trip.)
12. a

Hey, overachiever! If you scored an Also Pretty Good on this quiz, enter the coupon code **HONORSYSTEM** at store.mentalfloss.com and save an extra 15% on your order.
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Your Score!

- **0-4** Pretty Good
- **5-7** The Best
- **8-9** The Worst
- **10-12** Also Pretty Good

CORBIS (DESK)

The Definitive Personality Test

Which Defunct Bowl Game Are You?

Bowl Season Starts DEC. 21!

START HERE

What's your ideal setting?

- Scenic New Zealand!
- Scenic Havana!
- Scenic Evansville, Ind.!

What hurdles have you overcome?

- New Zealand's indifference to football.
- Our dictator threatening to cancel the game when his photo wasn't in the program.
- Our ferocious local war dances.

What does a good name promote?

- Sam Houston State Teachers College.
- Our delicious local rum industry.
- Our prodigious local refrigerator production.

Which school would you call your reigning champ?

- A tie between Auburn and Villanova.

Which oddly named bowl do you mock?

- The Tobacco Bowl, no doubt.
- The Pretzel Bowl.

What was your eventual undoing?

- The Havana Athletic Club.
- Lacking funds to pay the participating teams.
- Our unstable political climate.
- Not having the Salad Bowl's drawing power.

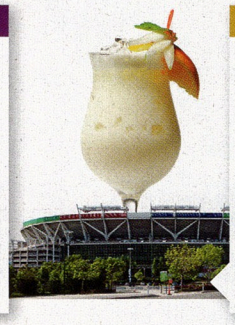
Who was your unlikeliest participant?

- The Gustavus Adolphus College Golden Gusties.

YOU ARE

HAKA BOWL

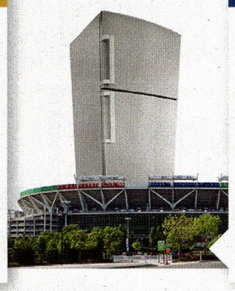
The NCAA sanctioned this New Zealand tilt for the 1996 season, but organizers couldn't scrape together the cash.



YOU ARE

BACARDI BOWL

From 1907 to 1946, Havana hosted seven bowl games, including five that pitted American squads against Cuban opponents.



YOU ARE

REFRIGERATOR BOWL

You were quite possibly the best bowl game ever played in southern Indiana, but organizers packed it in after 1956.

ALAMY (STADIUM, HAKA)
ISTOCK (DRINK, REFRIGERATOR)

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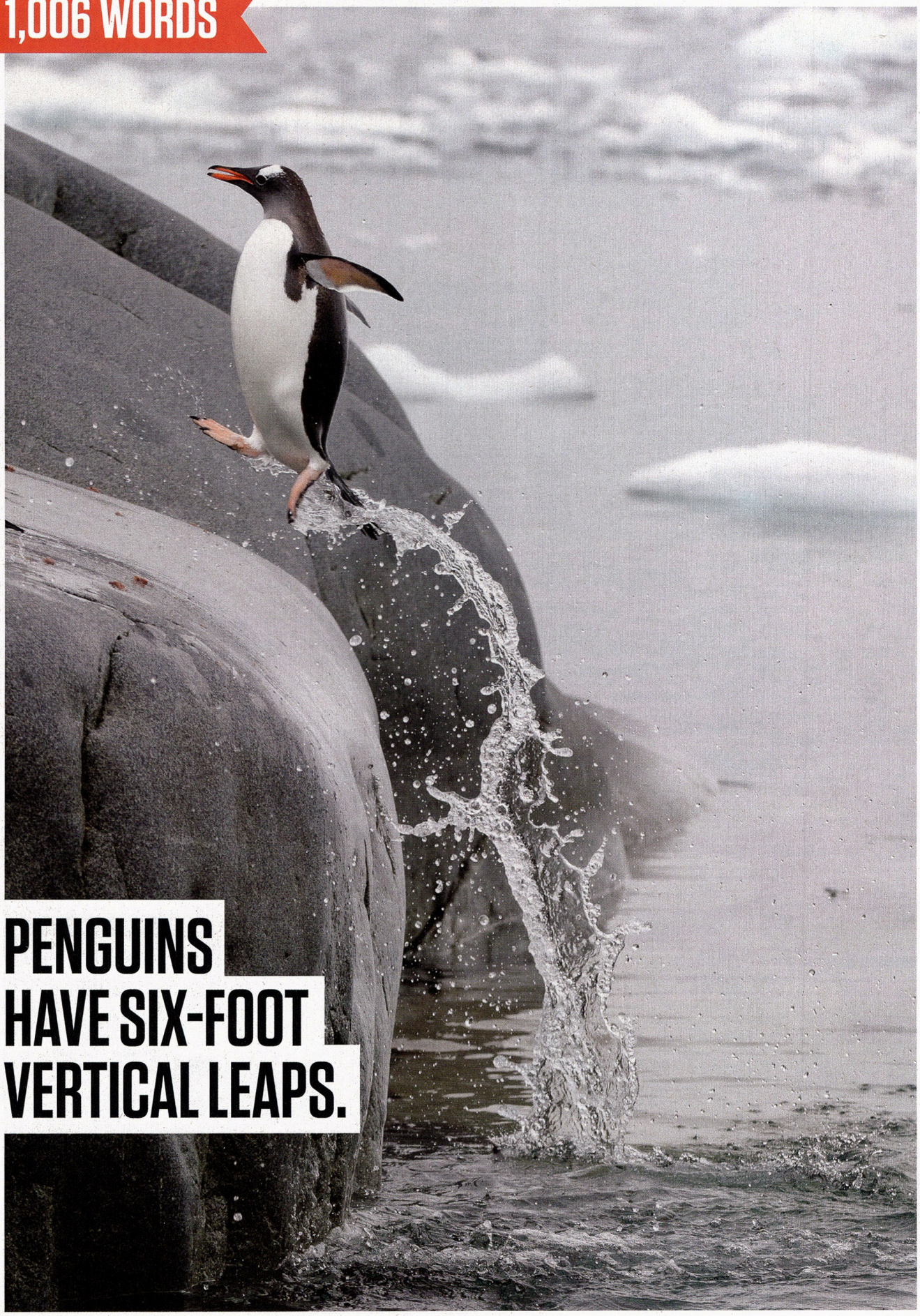

PENGUINS HAVE SIX-FOOT VERTICAL LEAPS.

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